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DETECTIVE STORIES

# MYSTERY MAGAZINE

AUG. 1, 1924

NO. 161

Feature Detective Story  
"At TWO A.M."  
by Beulah Poynter





# Mystery Magazine

Vol. VII

AUGUST 1, 1924

No. 161

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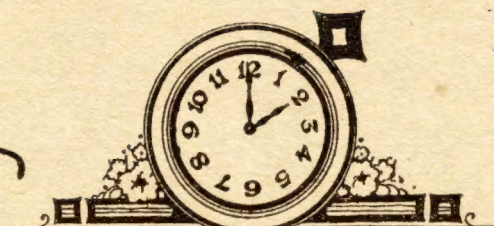
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Read about the nearly perfect crime and the unimaginative detective who exposed it.

In addition to all the above mentioned material our next number will contain an assortment of short items of general interest and one of POLICE-CAPTAIN HOWARD'S splendid articles on the subject of criminals and their detection.

**BE SURE TO READ OUR NEXT ISSUE!**

THE EDITOR.



# At TWO A.M.

by Beulah Doynter

## CHAPTER ONE

“OF course it hasn’t got into the papers,” snapped Kenyon’s visitor. “The police ain’t gonna let the public know what mistakes they make! Twelve robberies within two weeks and not a single arrest! My Gawd! What a bunch of crime! Petty thieves, my eye! It’s a gang, and a darn clever one at that! That’s what it is, a gang that’s pullin’ all this stuff!”

The man sprang to his feet and paced the carpeted length of the room, his small green eyes mere slits above the heavy layers of flesh on his high cheek bones. He was an enormous man, broad of shoulder, with heavy, large-boned arms, huge legs, muscular and fleshy. His great bullet-shaped head was covered with a thick growth of closely trimmed sandy hair, and a sandy mustache half hid his thin lips, now drawn back in a disgusted sneer.

A badly fitting suit of bottle green serge, evidently donned for the occasion, covered his huge frame. He seemed to fill the small office, and the odor of the cheap cigar upon

which he puffed mingled with the perfume with which he had saturated a red-bordered handkerchief that protruded from the breast pocket of his coat.

Detective Neil Kenyon, debonair, slightly gray, immaculately groomed, by all appearances the typical man-about-town, leaned back in his swivel chair leisurely and sized up his visitor with a cynical smile upon his lean face. Then abruptly he straightened up, rested his elbows upon his glass-topped desk, and asked:

“And what is your particular interest in these robberies, Mr.—Mr.—?”

“John Nelson, that’s my name. I’m interested because six of ’em has taken place in my house.”

“Your house?”

“Yeh. I’m superintendent of an apartment-house up in the Heights; more’n superintendent, for that matter—kind of agent, you might say, for I collect the rents, lease the apartments and such like, and around the first of the month I sometimes have as much as five thousand dollars in my pocket. Say, I can’t sleep thinkin’ what I would do if one of them birds should walk in on

me and suddenly stick a gun in my face. I'm no coward, but I'm not hankerin' after trouble."

"Why don't you get permission to carry a gun yourself?" Kenyon inquired dryly.

The big man whirled. He placed one hairy paw upon the desk facing him.

"Say, them guys gave me the ha-ha, and asked me if I was scared of a bunch of kids that stole in at the fire escapes to swipe ladies' gew-gaws when they was off playing bridge or attendin' matinees? They made me so darn sore they got my nanny, and I up and walks out of the office, my mind made up to run the crooks to earth or quit my job! And, by Gawd, I'm gonna do it, too!"

"Why did you come to me?"

"You're a detective, ain't you? And a darn good one, if what I've heard is true." Kenyon smiled.

"But I don't handle cases like this. You haven't been robbed yourself, have you?"

"No, I haven't been robbed, and I ain't goin' tuh be if I can help it. Say, if it's money that's worryin' you, I've got plenty of dough——"

"It isn't that," interrupted the detective, the smile leaving his face. "But from what I have gathered these have all been petty robberies. The police may be right. A boy—a tramp—several different people—may have committed them."

"Petty robberies! Say, lemme tell you." Nelson hitched a chair closer to the desk and slumped into it. "A lot of the things that have been taken don't amount tuh very much, I'll agree in that. But one of my tenants has lost a sapphire necklace worth a lot more'n I'll ever see, and"—he paused—"and she ain't done a thing about it."

"You mean she hasn't tried to recover it?"

"No, she hasn't, nor reported its loss tuh the police, either. I wouldn't a-known a thing about it myself if a young girl, a niece of hers what was visitin' her, hadn't let the cat outa the bag! Now, I ask you, ain't that kinda queer?"

Kenyon drew a pair of eye-glasses from a silver case on the desk beside him, slowly wiped them on a bit of chamois, then adjusted them to his nose. He coughed.

"It is rather peculiar," he drawled. "Suppose you give me the details?"

"Mrs. Curtin, that's my tenant's name—Mrs. Elaine Curtin—is a widow. She lives in apartment 8 B, one of our best and most expensive apartments. She's a good-looker, about forty, I guess, without children, with an income, a Cadillac and pretty comfortable generally. Entertains a lot, too, she does—not noisy entertainin', you understand, but just nice genteel dinner parties that close up around eleven o'clock p. m. and bridge parties and such. And she has a bunch of swell-looking dames visitin' her all the time, callin' her on the phone, and drivin' up in Rolls Royces and soforth. She's tonier than anybody else we've got in the building. Once or twice I seen that sapphire necklace on her when she was all dolled up to go out some place, and, believe me, it was some eye-ful."

"Sometimes I have trouble keepin' elevator boys, yon know, and when I'm shy on help it's up to me to run the car myself. One night I was runnin' it when she got in on her way to the opera. And there was that string of blue ice dangling around her throat and glitterin' for all the world like the finest diamonds ever. I couldn't keep my trap shut for admirin' 'em, and just busted out something about how handsome I thought they was, and she smiles and says they was heirlooms and worth Gawd knows how much, and that she usually kept 'em in a safety vault."

"One day one of my tenants came home and found her place all topsy-turvy and a bunch of silverware and some bills missing. She threw a fit, but it didn't do any good, the things was gone and there didn't seem to be a way on earth tuh get 'em back. Then a second robbery occurred in my house. That one looked as if it was an inside job. The tenant fired a new maid, though she couldn't prove a thing on her and let it go at that."

"Just about a week later a pretty little girl from somewhere down South came to pay Mrs. Curtin a visit. Madeline Curtin was her name, so by the name I guessed she must be the niece of the Mr.'s instead of the widow's. And then the sapphire necklace disappeared."

"I was just outside of apartment 8 B fixing a broken bit of tiling in the floor when I heard Madeline Curtin cry out: 'Elaine! Where's your sapphire necklace? It's gone!' Then Mrs. Curtin screamed, and there was a lot of talk that I couldn't quite catch.

"That night I was runnin' the elevator and two women got in it. Just to be pleasant, not meaning at all to be nosey, I asks Mrs. Curtin if she'd found her pretty jewels. She looked as startled as if I'd said, 'What did you do with the body?' but Madeline pipes up: 'No, and we won't call in the police!' But Mrs. Curtin says as calm as you please that she'd employed a private detective.

"'Who?' I asks.

"'I—I——' Gosh! she looked bumfoozled. 'I don't remember his name,' she says. Now——" He spread out his huge hairy hands as though he had said enough.

"Maybe she has employed one," said Kenyon.

"And maybe she hasn't. Yesterday there was a guy come to the house and asked for her. I recognized him as belonging to an insurance company. I think he come to settle with her for them jewels."

"I don't see where I have anything to do with this," said Kenyon slowly. "It is Mrs. Curtin's business whether she wishes to engage help in securing her property or not. Why have you come to me?"

"Because I've got a hunch these robberies ain't goin' to stop, and if many more are pulled in my building it'll give the place a bad name. So I wanta land the crooks." Nelson jerked the cigar out of his mouth and flung it violently into the cuspidor.

"And?" prompted the detective.

"I'm ready to pay your price for the best worker you've got if you'll send him right up. And there's fifty on account." He pulled out a well-filled bill-fold.

"How'll you take care of him?" Kenyon asked.

"There's a lady in our building that rents rooms. It's against rules, but she's old and quiet, so I sorta shut my eyes. She's got a room vacant now. Send your man up and have him engage it."

Kenyon tapped on a bell at his elbow. A

moment later a boy extremely freckled, with two front teeth missing, appeared.

"Yeh, Chief?" he grinned.

"Ask Miss Alden to step here a minute," directed the head of the agency.

"A woman!" gasped Nelson.

"You wanted my best operator. Miss Alden is the best I have."

## CHAPTER TWO

A GIRL stepped into the office. She came in so noiselessly that she was beside the desk before Nelson was aware of her presence. She was slight, a little under medium height, diminutive in comparison to the huge giant who towered above her. She had quantities of dark brown hair which she wore parted in the middle and coiled in a soft knot at the back of her neck—glossy smooth and without a curl or undulation in it. It covered her ears and came down well over her temples. Her eyes were gray, but with so many golden flecks in them as to make them appear yellow. Her skin, entirely devoid of color, was creamy ivory, soft-looking, attractive to touch. Her nose was as straight as an East Indian's, and her mouth, small, delicately curved, was saved from weakness by the stubborn rounded little chin below it.

She wore a plain black satin gown, severely straight of line, close-fitting, without an ornament of any kind nor a touch of color, yet she gave the impression of being exceedingly well-dressed, of being "to the manner born," from the tips of her toes, clad in black patent leather pumps, to the coils of her silky dark hair.

Nelson sucked in his breath. "My Gawd," he gasped, "are you a detective?" The girl smiled.

"Miss Alden, this is Mr. Nelson," Kenyon said quietly, a hint of amusement at the other's obvious admiration in his smooth voice. "I think I am going to put you on his case, Wanda," he added. "Sit down."

She did as he directed. She folded her hands in her lap, and from the time Kenyon began his explanation of the case and what he wished her to do until he finished

speaking she was the epitome of poise, utmost repose. The expression of her face never wavered.

When Kenyon arose she arose also.

"The address, please"—she turned to the superintendent—"and the name of the lady who takes roomers."

Nelson gave them to her. His cock-sureness was gone. He was awed, overwhelmed by her beauty.

"If you will be so good as to ask this Mrs. Osborne to reserve a room for me," she said quietly, "I will move up there tonight. Tell her that I am an acquaintance of yours and that I have references. I will report to you tomorrow, Mr. Kenyon."

She passed out of the room as silently as she had entered it.

### CHAPTER THREE

MATTIE OSBORNE, a little faded old lady considerably past sixty years of age, and the widow of a retired army officer, upon finding that her income was not sufficient to maintain her, had furnished two of the rooms in her apartment with the intention of taking in lodgers. Her apartment was a comparatively large one, as apartments go in New York. It consisted of seven rooms, four of them opening off of a long hallway in which she was compelled to always keep a light burning. One of these rooms was assigned Neil Kenyon's operative.

Wanda Alden upon ringing the old lady's bell had found her already prepared for her arrival and perfectly willing to rent the room to her upon the superintendent's references. It was a rather small one, with one window, draped with pink and blue cretonnes, and a single bed covered with the same material. A dresser and one rocking-chair were all the furniture it afforded.

Wanda looked about her cramped quarters, took a towel off a rod hanging on the door and started for the bathroom. As she did so a young man stepped out of the room just opposite hers. He was short rather than tall, but so lightly built as to

give the impression of height. In the brief glimpse she had of him she noticed that he had very blond hair and wore heavy rimmed eyeglasses with blue lenses.

He murmured, "Excuse me," and leaned against the wall to allow her to pass. Later she asked Mrs. Osborne if he was her son and the old lady replied:

"Oh, no, but he has been with me for quite a while; rooms with me, you know. I'm very fond of him."

"What is his business?" the girl detective inquired, carefully keeping her voice casual.

"Tommy's business?" the old lady hesitated. "Dear me! I'll swan if I know. I don't remember ever askin' him. I think I always 'lowed he had means of his own and didn't have to work."

Twice during the day Wanda passed her fellow lodger in the hallway. It seemed to her that he appraised her from the tip of her shoe to the crown of her head, and she flushed angrily.

Through his heavy glasses she detected a humorous glint in his hazel eyes, which made her feel that he was laughing at her. She wondered if by any chance he knew that she was a detective and realized just how gigantic the task was she had accepted, how hard the problem was to solve.

Before becoming installed as a roomer at Mrs. Osborne's she had purchased several dozen pairs of various colored silk stockings with a view to peddling them from door to door, and in this manner gain access to the different apartments in the building.

She knew that her chief, Neil Kenyon, was more than half convinced that the robberies which had taken place in the neighborhood had been perpetrated by petty thieves and not by a gang at all and that the superintendent, Nelson, was throwing his money away; but as she was engaged to make a certainty of this she was determined to leave no stone unturned so far as her work was concerned.

Of Nelson she saw nothing at all.

Early the next morning, which was Thursday, dressed in her plainest dark gown and hat, she made a round of the

apartments on her floor and the two above. Ringing the different bells, she waited patiently until some one answered them. Two places she sold some of her wares, one door was rudely closed in her face.

Then she approached the Curtin apartment. This was on the eighth floor, in a similar position to Mrs. Osborne's.

A colored maid opened the door a trifle, staring at her with undisguised hostility as she saw there was a stranger outside.

"Is Mrs. Curtin at home?" Wanda asked politely.

"No, ma'am, she ain't!" snapped the maid. "Likewise, Mis' Curtin don't ever buy nothin' from pedlers."

Wanda smiled and moved slightly away. At that moment a pleasant voice, evidently coming from the bathroom, inquired:

"Who is there, Mandy?"

"Jes' a pedler," replied the maid with scorn.

Before she could close the door Wanda stepped into the foyer and came face to face with Elaine Curtin.

The widow was a stunning blonde woman, probably forty years old, with an ample but beautifully proportioned figure, large darkly shadowed blue eyes, and a delicately tinted skin. A heavily embroidered kimono of red and black was wrapped about her, and her pink heels protruded from red satin mules. Her wealth of lustrous hair hung about her plump shoulders in a golden cascade.

She stared at the girl. Then she smiled. She possessed great magnetism, a sense of humor, and was evidently a lady.

"What is it you want?" Mrs. Curtin asked, but the tone in which she asked the question robbed it of any discourtesy.

Wanda opened the parcel she carried, glancing as she did so at the furnishings of the rooms, of which she could get a good view through the open doors. She saw Persian rugs on the floors, almost priceless teakwood and mahogany chairs and tables, silken velour drapes and some rare paintings too costly and massive for the walls they adorned.

"I've a lovely line of hosiery here," she said, "at a bargain, which I thought might interest you."

"Yes," Mrs. Curtin laughed. "My dear, for years I've purchased all my stockings at a certain store, and I fancy nothing that you could show me would suit me better."

"I'm sorry," murmured Wanda.

At that moment the outer door opened and a girl burst into the room—a slender slip of a girl in a riding habit. Her brown hair was blown about her face and her eyes sparkled. Her round cheeks were rosy from contact with wintry winds, and everything about her breathed vitality and the exuberance of youth. When she saw the older woman the smile on her lips vanished and Wanda with surprise noted a certain wistfulness in her expression.

A sudden gleam shot through Mrs. Curtin's shadowed blue eyes. She seemed to stiffen, the cordial manner which had made her so attractive disappeared. When she spoke to Wanda she seemed to be an altogether different woman.

"I'm quite sure you have nothing to interest me," she said coldly. "I'm sorry."

Wanda moved toward the door. Outside in the hallway she heard the widow exclaim in a shrill, almost strident voice:

"Madeline, where have you been so early? With that impossible man again?"

"Yes, auntie, if he can't come here to see me I have to meet him outside my home. You might as well know first as last I love Tommy, and some day I am going to marry him!"

"Tommy!" whispered Wanda. "Tommy! I wonder if she means Tommy Dale, Mrs. Osborne's other lodger?"

#### CHAPTER FOUR

WANDA was always a light sleeper.

This night she was troubled with an attack of insomnia. In vain she tried to woo slumber, tossing about restlessly until well after two o'clock, then finally she switched on her light and, wandering down the long, dark hallway of the apartment, found her way into the kitchen.

As she stood by the sink getting a drink she heard a sound in the dumb-waiter shaft which made her grow tense and hold her

breath. Unquestionably the dumbwaiter was moving. Strange at this hour!

She crept noiselessly to it, after extinguishing the light, and opened the door a trifle. The ropes were still quivering, but the lift itself was not in sight.

Above her she saw a faint light as though the door opening into the overhead kitchen were open and a light come from it.

Then she heard sounds like a bag of meal or some heavy object being thrown to the floor and footsteps as of some one moving about, then complete silence.

"Well, this is queer!" she ejaculated, for she suddenly recalled that Mrs. Osborne had informed her that the apartment above was vacant; in fact, had had no tenant since September.

She hesitated for a second uncertainly, then tiptoed down the hall to the telephone, which rested on a small table near the door. She received no answer when she took down the receiver.

"The elevator boy must be asleep!" she muttered in exasperation. Then, determined to arouse the superintendent in some way, she pulled on a bathrobe and ran down the stairs. She knew that, in common with most janitors of apartment-houses, he had lodgings in the basement.

A night light was burning at each landing, but otherwise the halls and stairways were in darkness. The little detective's footsteps were soundless.

On the first floor she saw the colored boy who acted as switch-board operator and elevator man. He was sound asleep, his feet on a chair, his round, woolly head pressed against the wall. He did not open his eyes as she brushed past him and darted down another flight of stairs into a cavern of darkness. A musty, stale odor greeted her nostrils.

The knocker was banged several times before she received any response; then a large woman in a flannelette nightgown, her grayish, blonde hair in two thin braids on either side of her heavily jowled face, opened the door.

She blinked sleepily at Wanda, startled and annoyed at being aroused from her bed.

"What you vant?" she queried in broken English.

"Mr. Nelson—where is he?" asked the girl. It was very cold and she shivered in her slippered feet and robe.

"My man bane in bed," answered the woman. "What you vant vid him?"

"I've got to see him at once," Wanda replied. "Tell him it's Wanda Alden of Kenyon's who wants him, and he'll understand."

The woman hesitated. She looked at the young detective suspiciously, then said:

"Vait a minute. I tell him."

She closed the door, leaving Wanda outside.

After a little Nelson appeared. He had thrown a dressing gown about his great frame. His narrow eyes were heavy and sleepy like his wife's, but the instant he saw Wanda they brightened.

"Oh," he said thickly. "Come on in, Miss Alden. My wife didn't understand. She don't know anything about you and——"

"I can't stand here talking," Wanda said impatiently. "I may be mistaken, but if I'm not, there's something radically wrong going on in the apartment over Mrs. Osborne's."

"What!" He looked startled. "How can that be? It's empty."

"It was," she answered stubbornly, "but I heard footsteps in the kitchen and the dumbwaiter door opened. I thought you might want to know and investigate."

"The dumbwaiter!" There was consternation in his heavy voice. "That can't be. It's locked down here!"

"See if it is. I distinctly saw the rope move."

"Wait a minute." He vanished for a second, then returned with a pocket flash. "We'll see," he said.

He opened the door which led to the dumbwaiter. There was nothing but a black, empty space. Then presently, after her eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, Wanda discerned high above their heads, several stories up, the dumbwaiter itself, stationary!

"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed Nelson. "You go upstairs again, Miss Alden. I'll get into some clothes and go up to 7 B."

You're dead right, there is something wrong!"

"Don't take time to dress," she snapped.

"If they ain't got away already," he answered, "they'll not escape before I get there. I'll have Minna watch this door. You keep a lookout on the apartment door till I come. Got a gun?"

"In my room, yes."

"Get it. Don't say anythin' to anybody. It won't do any good to scare the tenants."

He disappeared.

## CHAPTER FIVE

WANDA climbed the stairs as rapidly as she could. On the first floor she again saw the sleeping elevator boy, and after shaking him managed to awaken him.

He straightened up with a groan, glaring at her with blinking, bloodshot eyes.

"Take me up to the sixth floor," she commanded. "I can't walk."

He lurched toward the elevator, shaking himself like a dog. After a few minutes he started the car. At her door she suddenly realized that she had come outside without her key and that the door was locked.

She turned to the boy, who grinned at her.

"Have you a key that will unlock this door?" she demanded.

"No, ma'am. Ah ain't got no key dat'll unlock any doah," he answered, and slouched lazily back to the elevator.

She did not like to ring the door-bell for admittance—that would necessitate an explanation as to why she happened to be out at this hour in an undressed condition, and that was the last thing she desired. Yet she dared not stay in the hallway until Nelson appeared. She did not feel that it would be safe for her to go to the floor above without her gun.

While she was debating what to do she heard footsteps on the stairs. Thinking it was the superintendent, she turned and came face to face with her fellow lodger, Tommy Dale.

Scarcely less surprised than she, he stared at her in amazement. Her dark hair hung like a dusky cloud about her red bathrobe and her bare ankles were plainly visible above the bedroom slippers she wore.

"I forgot my key," she explained in answer to his questioning glance.

The young man did not reply. He fumbled in his pockets until he produced his own key, then he unlocked the door and she darted inside, vanishing into her bedroom.

She heard him moving about in her room opposite to hers, and through a crack in the door she saw a light from his chamber pouring into the hallway. Evidently his door was open. How could she go out again? He had looked at her with suspicion. He might ask questions.

Then she remembered that he had seemed very nervous. His hat had been jammed down over his eyes, his collar was turned up to his chin and he had appeared furtive.

Wanda snatched up her revolver and stepped to her door. Opening it a trifle, she could distinctly see Dale. He was sitting on the bed with his face in his hands. She stepped into the hall, trying to be noiseless, but as she crossed the threshold he raised his head and looked at her.

She was amazed at the expression on his face. Great lines were drawn from nose to chin; his eyes, minus the glasses he had always worn whenever she had seen him before, were filled with a sick misery and his skin was pallid.

Just for a second their eyes met, then he rose abruptly and came toward her.

"Miss Alden," he said, "do you know Madeline Curtin?"

The question was so unexpected she almost laughed.

"Why, no," she answered.

"You've seen her?" There was a boyish eagerness in the interrogation.

"Yes, once."

"When?"

"This morning."

"This morning! She's disappeared. No one knows where she is. I'm half mad with worry."

"Disappeared! Doesn't Mrs. Curtin know where she's gone?"

"No. Madeline was to have met me to-

day at four o'clock. We were going to be married—elope. Her aunt didn't like me, so—well, I waited and waited—an hour—two hours, then I telephoned. She was not at home. She had gone out earlier in the day. I phoned later. She had not returned. Finally I got worried. I came here and went to Mrs. Curtin's apartment. She was cordial enough when she saw me, for she was worried, too. She couldn't understand Madeline's going away and leaving no word. I telephoned every place I could think of, but no one had seen her. I've gone everywhere. Something must have happened to her." He dropped back on the bed again, his face in his hands.

"I'm sorry," said the girl. "But I wouldn't despair. Have you notified the police?"

"No; but I shall in the morning whether her aunt wishes it or not."

"She objects?"

"Yes. She wants no publicity."

"I can understand that. I'm sure you'll find her. Maybe she has gone to the home of some friend of whom you know nothing and has tried to notify you and failed. You'll hear from her in the morning, I'm sure."

"I hope so. I'm sorry to burden you with my worries, but I had to talk to some one," he smiled.

"If there's anything I can do call on me."

She moved toward the outer door, cautiously opened it and stepped into the dark hall.

A moment later she stood before the vacant apartment, her revolver hidden in the folds of her robe. She tried the door, but it was locked. No sound came from within.

It seemed a century before Nelson's lumbering figure joined her, but in reality it was only a few seconds.

"Hear or see anything?" he asked, breathing heavily from his climb up the stairs.

She shook her head.

He bent over and listened at the keyhole, then from his pocket produced a ring with many keys on it, tried several in the lock, finally found one which fitted it and opened the door.

It was pitch dark inside the apartment.

"Careful," he cautioned. "There may be some one inside the place. Keep your revolver handy and follow me."

Nelson used his pocket flash to guide them down the long, private hall similar to the one in Mrs. Osborne's apartment. The electric lights were disconnected, and faint dancing shadows on the wall were cast by the little lantern.

They went into each room by turn, but all were empty. So were the clothes closets, the living-room, the dining-room, kitchen, bathroom and pantry. There was not a stick of furniture in the place. In fact, there was nothing to indicate that any one had been in the apartment for months. The windows were locked and stained with drops of white paint. A roll of wallpaper lay on the kitchen floor. There were splashes of paint on the sink, and everywhere there was an odor of varnish and fresh paint such as is found in newly decorated houses.

Nelson looked at the girl blankly.

"I'm afraid your imagination worked overtime, Miss Alden," he said grimly. "There's been no one here tonight."

"It wasn't my imagination that made those dumbwaiter ropes move," she shot back at him, "and you can see for yourself that the door is on the latch."

She opened the door as she spoke. There was no dumbwaiter resting stationary there, nor did she see it any place in the dark abyss below.

## CHAPTER SIX

THE telephone bell jangled. Its ringing, coming at that eerie hour as they stood in the empty apartment, startled the janitor.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. His hand trembled as he took down the receiver. "Yah, yah," he said into the phone. Then he gave a cry of dismay. "My Gawd! No! No!"

"What is it?" asked Wanda curiously.

"I've been robbed!" The receiver dropped from his hand as he turned. "That was my wife on the phone. She got fright-

ened and looked in the safe—it was open—the money gone—stripped clean.”

“Robbed.”

“Yes, five thousand dollars. All last month’s rent money.”

“Then I wasn’t mistaken,” said the detective. “But how did they get away?”

“Gawd knows. Come on. You’ve seen enough here. I’ve got to go down to my wife. She’s in hysterics.”

Wanda found Mrs. Nelson wringing her hands and sobbing incoherently. The safe door was open and it was empty. It stood in a little foyer of the superintendent’s apartment, behind a heavy denim-covered screen, and was the kind which is commonly used in real estate offices. There was no indication that force had been used to open it, nor clues of any kind. It was not light enough for the girl detective to observe any fingerprints if there had been any.

Sleep was out of the question for the young operative after that. Several times before daylight she imagined she heard footsteps overhead, the creaking of ropes, the closing of doors. But she realized it was only her fancy.

Across the hall, the young man with whom she sympathized, yet whom she suspected, paced the floor.

With the first morning rays of light she rose and dressed. At a dairy lunch on Broadway she had a cup of coffee and some toast, then she took the subway downtown to Neil Kenyon’s office to make her report.

Though it was early when she entered the office, Kenyon was already there. His face was grim and puzzled looking.

“Has Nelson phoned you?” she asked him.

“Yes. I advised him to notify the police, and he said that he had done so. I believe that he is right, after all. This is no job of petty thieves. Tell me what you know.”

Briefly Wanda explained the events of the night before, also what young Dale had told her about Madeline Curtin’s disappearance.

“Who is this Dale?” asked Kenyon sharply.

“I don’t know yet. He seems to have no occupation, and evidently is not in Mrs. Curtin’s favor. His attitude last night made me sorry for him. I can’t really say that I dislike him.”

“Describe the man.”

She did so.

A peculiar smile settled about Kenyon’s thin lips. His eyes half closed. He reached for the telephone and said: “Hey, operator, get me Washington Heights 929991.”

“Why, that’s the number of Nelson’s apartment-house!” Wanda exclaimed.

“I know it. Washington Heights 929991? I want to speak to Mr. Dale, please—Mr. Tommy Dale.” There was a moment’s silence, then he spoke again: “Mr. Dale? This is Neil Kenyon speaking, of the Kenyon Detective Agency. Number — Broadway. Would it inconvenience you very much to come down to my office right away? You’ll come? Thanks. I’ll expect you in half an hour. Good-by.”

“What’s the big idea?” Wanda asked as he hung up the receiver.

“Unless I’m vastly mistaken,” Kenyon drawled, “Tommy Dale is one of the best detectives on the police force—Dale Merton by name. I didn’t think the force was cat-napping; now I’m certain they aren’t. If Dale doesn’t come down here, we’ll keep our eyes on him. If he does come, I’ll know in a minute who he is.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour later Tommy Dale entered Neil Kenyon’s office. Evidently the heavy glasses he usually wore were unnecessary so far as his sight was concerned, and had only been used as a disguise, for he was without them now.

He looked as though he had not removed his clothing all night, for his coat was rumpled, and there were wrinkles in his trousers. His face was pallid, and there was a heavy growth of beard on his chin and cheeks.

He seemed amazed when he saw Wanda. Neil Kenyon rose from behind his desk with his usual nonchalant manner and extended his hand.

"I thought it was you, Merton, when Miss Alden described her fellow lodger. What's the idea? Are you on the trail of the Washington Heights crooks?"

"Yes." Dale, or rather Merton, dropped limply into the nearest chair, and with fingers which trembled visibly lighted a cigarette. "Yes, I am—that is, I was, but I didn't know Miss Alden was in your employ."

Wanda smiled.

"And I had no idea you were a detective," she admitted. "In fact, I had you under suspicion."

"You look seedy, Merton; what's the trouble?" Kenyon asked abruptly.

The young man scowled.

"A couple of weeks ago my chief sent me uptown to look into these robberies, and it struck me as a good idea to make my home in the neighborhood. It appears you thought it was a good idea, also, for Miss Alden did the same thing. I sort of mixed in with the people up there, hanging around cigar stores, newsstands, restaurants and so forth, to see if it was a gang of kids that was pulling the robberies. I hoped to get a clue of some kind by talking to every one."

"And you didn't get anything?"

"Not a darn clue. One night I was talking to a chap—nice young fellow who owns a stationery store on Broadway—when a girl walked by. It was late and she was alone. She was walking pretty fast, as though some one was following her. Pretty soon I saw that some one was trailing the kid, a drunken bum who is a character in that district. He didn't mean any real harm, but she was afraid of him, so I volunteered to escort her to her door. She accepted my offer, and to my surprise she led me right to the building where I lived."

"Madeline Curtin," ventured Wanda smilingly.

"Yes. It was a case of being bowled over at first sight. Dreamed about her all night. And she seemed to like me. But her aunt, with whom she was living, didn't cotton to

me at all, possibly because I had no visible occupation, and I wasn't in a position to tell her the truth about myself. Anyway, Madeline and I had to meet outside, and there was always a row when Mrs. Curtin found out about it. Yesterday Madeline disappeared——"

"Maybe the older woman sent her away," suggested Kenyon.

"No, I don't think so. She's so upset about it she's taken to her bed, and because she knows I love Madeline she has seemed to have overcome her dislike for me and has asked me to help her search for the girl."

"What sort of a woman is Mrs. Curtin?"

"All class. A lady to her fingertips. Southern, I think, and apparently well-to-do. I don't blame her much for objecting to me; I'm only a bum detective."

"I suppose you know the superintendent was robbed last night of five thousand dollars?"

Merton stiffened.

"No! I didn't know it. By George, that'll be my finish. Do they know it in my office?"

"I think so. Nelson phoned me this morning that he had notified the police."

"You'll excuse me, but I'll have to beat it, or lose my skin. Sorry to hurry." The young man rose quickly, now alert and business-like. "See you later, Miss Alden," he said. "But don't give me away to Mrs. Osborne."

"That's mutual," she laughed.

"I'm going uptown with you, Wanda," said Kenyon after the door closed behind Merton. "I want to talk to Nelson, and I want to see that vacant apartment."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

NEIL KENYON'S car, a closed coupé, stood just outside on Broadway. His chauffeur, a young ex-service man in a natty uniform, was chatting with a pretty chorus girl as Wanda and her employer appeared.

The chauffeur looked embarrassed, and the girl moved hurriedly away.

"Beat it up to the Heights to this address," Kenyon directed tersely.

As they turned into Madison avenue the traffic policeman blew his whistle and stopped them for the up and down machines to proceed, and they paused beside a big Cadillac limousine driven by a negro chauffeur. In the rear seat were two women, both heavily veiled—one, a slender, dark-haired girl, leaned against the bosom of the other, a rather stout person. The girl appeared to be asleep.

Wanda caught at Kenyon's sleeve.

"Neil!" she whispered, "there's Mrs. Curtin, as sure as I am alive, and Madeline is with her."

"What?" Then Kenyon called to his driver: "Don't let that Cadillac out of your sight! Follow it, but don't appear to do so."

The big car turned downtown and Kenyon's coupé followed. The Cadillac stopped before the Grand Central station. The negro alighted, lifted two bags from the seat beside him, then assisted the women out of the machine. The girl lurched as though she were very ill.

"They're taking a train!" whispered Wanda. "Shall I follow?"

"They might recognize you. I'll saunter in and find out where they are going. You drive uptown and see if they left any forwarding address. I'll telephone you. It looks suspicious. I may take the train with them."

He doffed his hat and disappeared inside the station.

The machine carried the little detective back to the apartment house.

Wanda had scarcely gotten inside her room when the telephone bell rang. She took down the receiver before Mrs. Osborne could do so and found that it was Kenyon speaking to her.

"They've bought tickets for New Haven," he said. "I'm taking the next train up. If you see Merton, tell him. I think there is something shady here—just a hunch, but I'm going to follow it. Don't leave the house; I may want you. And get all the information you can out of Nelson."

As soon as she could Wanda sent for the

superintendent. He was sullen and angry because of a grilling from the apartment-house owner, who was a little inclined to blame the detective agency because Kenyon had not protected him.

"Tell me just what you know of Mrs. Curtin," interrupted Wanda. "What were her references?"

"I don't know nothin' about her except her references was first-class in every way. She's a lady, I tell yuh. She's been robbed herself. Say, if you think she'd stoop tuh stealin' five thousand from me, you're barkin' up the wrong tree. Anyway, how could she do it?"

"I don't know; but her apartment is just above the vacant one, and I've got an idea she's a high-class crook."

Nelson laughed harshly.

"You detectives have sure got some imagination," he sneered. "You just about make me tired."

## CHAPTER NINE

**D**ALE MERTON did not appear until six o'clock. The instant Wanda heard him moving about in his room she opened the door and called to him softly.

"Will you come here a moment, please?" she asked.

When he joined her she spoke rapidly of her suspicions of Mrs. Curtin.

He listened to what she had to say in silence, then he laughed.

"I agree with Nelson. Kenyon is on a wild goose chase if he's gone after Mrs. Curtin. She's above suspicion."

"I have an idea," said Wanda slowly, "that she drugged the girl; she certainly looked like it when I saw her today."

"Yes, but where did she hide her if she did? Elaine Curtin never left the house yesterday. I know that for a fact. Where was Madeline?"

"I think Kenyon will have something to tell us about that," Wanda answered.

"I'm not going to wait for Kenyon's information," said the officer. "Robbery or no robbery, I'm going to New Haven and get Madeline."

"Good luck to you; I hope you are in time."

"Darn the Curtin woman!" he exclaimed hotly. "If she has injured my sweetheart I'll——" He was gone before the sentence was finished.

Later in the day Wanda received a wire from Kenyon giving her the name of the hotel where he was staying.

"The Curtins are here also, but I haven't seen them," he continued. "You stay there. I may send for you."

## CHAPTER TEN

THE whole apartment-house was in an uproar. Tenants were grouped about discussing the robbery, policemen running in and out of the corridors, and there was general consternation.

Wanda learned then of several other thefts which had taken place in the building and the neighborhood. It had leaked out about Madeline Curtin's disappearance and then of Mrs. Curtin's departure, and one and all they associated the two women with the crime, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Curtin's colored maid insisted that her mistress had simply gone away for the week-end.

Through Nelson the owner of the apartment building learned that Wanda was a detective, and he almost drove her frantic with questions.

The superintendent alone insisted that Mrs. Curtin could not be guilty.

"My Lord!" he protested, "wasn't she robbed herself? She lost more'n your five thousand dollars, Mr. Martin, or Mrs. Stannard's punk diamonds. You gimme a pain!"

"Maybe she never had no sapphire necklace," returned the landlord. "Maybe she faked it all. How should we know if she is a thief? A blind she put over our eyesight! Why did she hide the kid away?"

"Why, 'cause she didn't want her tuh marry that loafer livin' at Mrs. Osborne's, that's why."

The safe where Nelson had been in the habit of keeping the rent money was exam-

ined. Evidently the person who had opened it had known the combination of the lock, for it was in good condition and nothing but the cash had been taken. Leases and various other papers were undisturbed.

Merton had gone to New Haven, and for twenty-four hours Wanda had not heard from Kenyon. Obeying his instructions, she did not leave the building, but with Nelson went over every inch of the apartments above, hoping to find a clue to the burglar.

The dumbwaiter was a large one, and to test it she climbed in and had him pull her to the apartment overhead and draw her out through the door, much to the amazement of Mrs. Curtin's colored maid Mandy.

"My lawsy! My lawsy!" exclaimed the black girl, as dusty and much disheveled Wanda appeared. "Yuh done skaired me out'n ten years' growth of mah life! What fool trick are you doin', anyway?"

She had been scrubbing the linoleum on the kitchen floor in an unconcerned manner, in spite of the fact that Wanda had questioned her several times during the day and had insisted upon going all through her mistress's belongings.

"You take the 'sponsibility, not me," she snapped. "If there's anything shows up missin' she'll have yuh arrested, 'cause she knows Ah'm honest!"

"All right, Chocolate Drop! All right!" Wanda answered lightly.

"What for you climbin' up and down dat dumbwaitah?" Mandy asked in amazement.

Wanda turned to her and retorted:

"Where were you day before yesterday?"

"Dat's mah day off, and Ah went visitin' on mah old man; we seen a movie, and——"

"Do you sleep here?"

"No, ma'am, Ah sleeps out. But Ah doan see"—her black eyes flashed indignantly—"how dat's any ob yo' business."

"You'll answer me just the same, as you would one of those policemen," said Wanda firmly. "I happen to be a detective."

"Mah Lawsy! A woman detective! Say, you doan think Ah robbed Mistah Nelson, does yuh?"

"No, I don't; but I think you know

something you don't want the police to know."

"Whut you mean?" the black girl's eyes shifted, and she lost her brazen composure. Wanda, turning suddenly, intercepted a little glance which passed between her and the superintendent. A strong suspicion shot through her mind.

"Come on," she said, suddenly stiffening and placing her hand on the revolver in her dress pocket. "What time did you leave here Thursday?"

"Long 'bout twelve o'clock," mumbled the maid.

"Was Miss Curtin here then?"

"No, ma'am, she wasn't. She'd gone out."

"Where?"

"I doan know."

"Strange every one says she went out, but no one seems to have seen her go. What time did Mr. Dale call here to see her?"

"'Bout seven o'clock."

"How do you know if you weren't here?"

The colored girl choked. She looked frightened.

"Come on! The truth!"

"Well, Ah ain't done nothin' Ah shouldn't. Mr. Nelson knows Ah ain't bad, and as long as Mis' Curtin wanted me tuh help huh Ah ain't goin' ter lie about hit." She flung back her woolly head defiantly, and faced the superintendent. "Miss Madeline didn't go out at all Thursday. Her and Mis' Curtin had a terrible quarrel. Ah doan know what about, 'cause they was in Miss Madeline's room, and Ah was in the kitchen, but Ah heard Miss Madeline cry out, 'Ah'll tell! 'Fore Gawd, Ah'll tell!' Then I heard a crash, and Mis' Curtin come runnin' out tuh me, and said Miss Madeline had fainted."

"What time was that?"

"'Bout three o'clock, Ah reckon. Then she took something from the bathroom. I s'posed it was ammonia or camphor, but afterward I learned it was chloroform. And she tied a rag over Miss Madeline's mouth and soaked a towel with the stuff and put it on her face. Then she put huh on the bed and locked huh in huh room. I asked huh, 'What yuh doin' dat foh?' and she says

'Tuh keep huh from meetin' Mistah Dale.' Then she says Ah should keep mah mouth shut; that it was foh Miss Madeline's good, and that the girl didn't know huh own mind. And if I didn't ask no questions and swore that Miss Madeline had gone out, she would gimme fifty dollars, and I shore wanted fifty dollars.

"By and by Mistah Dale, he phoned and Ah say Miss Madeline have gone out. He phoned three times, and Ah allus say the same thing. Mis' Curtin got kinda worried for fear he'll come lookin' foh Miss Madeline, so she sends foh Mistah Nelson——"

Wanda whirled quickly and looked at the superintendent. There was a black scowl on his face, but he said nothing.

"Mistah Nelson come upstairs, and Mis' Curtin tells him how she found out Miss Madeline was going tuh elope with Mistah Dale, a no-'count loafer, and she asks him would he help huh tuh keep Miss Madeline 'way from him. Ah heard that much before Mis' Curtin sent me back tuh the kitchen. Anyway he sent the dumbwaiter up and they sticks Miss Madeline in it."

Nelson gave an exclamation. But Mandy paid no heed to it. She was growing dramatic with her recital.

"Miss Madeline war jest lak she war dead. And I was shore skairt. But they said she was all right, that hit was jest the chloroform that made huh look that away, and that they wouldn't keep huh there very long. Then they sent the waiter tuh the floor below, and took huh out in the apartment what ain't rented. That's all I know."

"Then," said Wanda slowly, turning to Nelson, "the noise I heard at two a. m. was when you lifted the poor girl back into the dumbwaiter and sent her up to her own home?"

"Yes," growled the man.

"Why did you lie to me or lead me to believe it was something else?"

He looked sheepish, but put on a bold front and said:

"I'm like Mandy. Mrs. Curtin offered to pay for my services, and she was right, anyway, in not wanting the girl to marry that bum."

"Didn't it strike you as rather drastic measures to use in keeping her from her

sweetheart, that maybe there was some other reason why she wanted to get the girl out of the way?"

"No. Why should it?" His face was blank.

Wanda was justly indignant, but the man's apparent stupidity showed her it was useless to bandy words with him.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

MARTIN, a small rotund individual, white-haired where he wasn't bald, red-faced, bristling and terribly upset over losing a small fortune belonging to him, trailed Wanda back and forth, consulted policemen, and made of himself a general nuisance.

Finally the girl cried in exasperation:

"You know, Mr. Martin, that it was very foolish of you to have your superintendent collect your rents and keep them in a safe downstairs, and——"

"But he had a pistol!" exclaimed the man, "and it saved me an agent! I was to get the money in a few days and bank it."

"And in the meantime some one, knowing that Nelson was in the habit of keeping large sums of money around the house at the first of the month, has helped himself."

"Herself!" snapped the landlord.

"Nonsense!" said Wanda. "Mrs. Curtin never opened the safe. She used peculiar methods to spirit away her niece, but she was not the person who took the money out of the safe."

"No? Are you positive?"

"Positive."

"How do you know?"

The girl detective smiled.

"I can't tell you now, but I think by to-morrow I may do so."

The landlord looked disgruntled.

"You detective people always have something up your sleeves, and then you won't say nothing."

They were standing in the lower foyer while they were talking, and as Wanda moved toward the elevator, she heard the boy at the switchboard speak into the receiver:

"No, ma'am, Mr. Dale ain't here. Any message?"

Wanda turned quickly and crossed over to him.

"Who wants Mr. Dale?" she asked.

"I dunno."

"Let me speak to her."

He moved out of the chair, and she took the receiver from his hand.

"Hello! Who wants Mr. Dale, please?" she called.

A girl's voice answered her, a voice pregnant with suspense and terror.

"Oh, can you tell me where he is? I must speak to him at once."

"Is this Madeline Curtin speaking?"

Wanda asked in a low tone, so that neither the boy, who had moved away, nor Martin, who was standing by the door, could hear.

"Yes; how did you know?"

"I am Wanda Alden," she replied, "your friend and—his. You can tell me what you want to tell him."

"I don't understand you."

"Where are you?"

"I'm in town. I—I got away from Aunt Elaine and I—I've got to see Tommy at once."

"Please tell me where you are and I'll come to you. And as soon as possible I'll put you in touch with Mr. Dale."

The girl seemed to hesitate.

"You are my friend—not hers?"

"Absolutely. Perhaps you know Mr. Dale is a detective?"

"Yes, I know it now."

"I am one also."

There was a little gasp, then Madeline spoke breathlessly. "I'm telephoning from the McAlpine Hotel. I'm not stopping here——"

"Will you meet me in the waiting-room of Gimbel's in half an hour?"

"Yes."

Wanda knew she was going against instructions by leaving the building, but she also knew she had to see Madeline Curtin, so she hurried to the place of appointment.

The girl was waiting for her, pacing back and forth the length of the carpeted floor, locking and unlocking her slender hands. Her great eyes roved wildly about the room as though she were in mortal terror.

Wanda touched her on the shoulder. She jumped, uttering a little cry.

"I'm Miss Alden," said the operative.

"Oh, yes, I—I was getting so afraid—if Aunt Elaine finds me I—I think she'll kill me. I—I want to tell Tommy something. Have you found him?"

"He is in New Haven," said Wanda. "He went there yesterday after you. Now tell me what happened to you?"

The girl collapsed in a chair.

"I climbed out of a window yesterday morning early before my aunt awoke; she sleeps heavily—she takes drugs," Madeline whispered tensely. "It wasn't far to the ground. I hid in a courtyard, behind some boxes, then later I begged the iceman to take me to the train in his wagon. I couldn't pay my fare—she had all my money—but the conductor took a ring I had. I'm to redeem it later. I'm so frightened—Miss—Miss——"

"Alden. You're safe with me. Come on. We'll get in a taxi and you can tell me all the rest of it."

A yellow car was called and they entered it and sped away.

Huddled in a corner, breathing more freely now, the girl told her story.

"My aunt—she isn't my real aunt, you know—only by marriage. She's a thief!"

"I know," said Wanda. "On the way down here I wired Mr. Kenyon, my employer, who is in New Haven, to hold her."

"I didn't know at first, of course, about Aunt Elaine, but when she sent for me to come to live with her I was glad. I was poor and alone and—you know about her sapphire necklace—she purposely made me think it was stolen, to divert suspicion. It wasn't stolen; I found it afterwards, but she made me keep still about it; they weren't sapphires, anyway, only imitation. But any one can lose something, so I didn't suspect anything wrong until Nelson kept coming to see her so often and——"

"Nelson?" interrupted Wanda.

"They didn't know I was in the apartment. I heard them talking. He had engaged you as a blind. That is, he said he had hired a detective. I didn't know it was you. He was going to take the money out of the safe that night, and Aunt Elaine was

going to take it away with a lot of other things they had stolen, and later, when everything had blown over, 'split it,' they said. They used the dumbwaiter shaft to get in and out of the apartments, and hid things in the empty apartment. They had been working together for a long time, it seemed, from their conversation. There was a boy, who pretended to collect laundry, who did the climbing in and out. When Aunt Elaine discovered I had heard them—I couldn't keep still I was so shocked—she choked me and chloroformed me, and——"

"Wait a minute!" called Wanda to the taxi driver. She left the machine and dashing into a drugstore called up police headquarters.

"Have John Nelson, No. — Washington Heights, arrested at once," she said, after explaining who she was. Then once more in the cab she directed the chauffeur to take her uptown to the apartment.

There, to her surprise, she found both Kenyon and Tommy Dale, otherwise Merton, awaiting her with a very much disheveled belligerent Mrs. Curtin and a small ratlike shifty-eyed boy. Both were under arrest.

Nelson confessed to practically the same story Madeline Curtin had told. But the Curtin woman protested her innocence to the last, glaring vindictively at the superintendent and her niece.

Flushed and happy Wanda accepted Kenyon's congratulations.

"Did you think Nelson was implicated at first?" he asked.

"Not until I had learned from the maid that he had helped Mrs. Curtin to spirit away the girl. Then I knew. That's why I wired you to arrest her, and asked Patrolman Clancy not to let him out of his sight."

The stolen money was found in Mrs. Curtin's night bag. She hadn't had time to dispose of it. Numerous articles pilfered from other tenants were found secreted in the vacant apartment.

Later they were returned to their owners.

A week afterward Wanda and Kenyon attended the wedding of Detective Merton to Madeline Curtin.

# The Mills of the Gods

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

## CHAPTER ONE

THE prisoner at the bar leaned forward as the court-officer strode the length of the long rail.

In the sudden hush there sounded the hysterical cry of a woman, the harsh voice of the bailiff in a stern reproof, then:

"Prisoner at the bar, stand up," the curt order came like a summons of doom.

The prisoner, Red Durgan, got heavily to his feet. He was a big man, loose and shambling, his face still white with the prison pallor of many months deprived of the sun; he had been out of "stir" but a scant six days, and now they were rail-roading him, sending him back to his prison-house of steel and stone, northward, beyond the city—and for what?

A crime had been committed; the "bulls" had been unable to find the criminal, until—they had picked up Durgan but a few days in the past. A hostile press, clamoring for the official heads of the Department, had set them by the ears; the "reform" wave had hit them just at a time when there had risen another epidemic of loft-burglaries, hold-ups, killings; the Safe-and-Loft Squad had been running around in circles; Headquarters detectives at a loose end.

And so they had made Durgan the goat.

He was not guilty. Whether or not he had been trying to go straight was not the point; he was not guilty—and now?

As in a daze he listened to the droning voice of the judge, "Old Hangman Merriweather."

"Hard labor. Twenty years."

And with the end of that sentence, and the stern face of the judge above him with its tight-lipped smile, Red Durgan lurched abruptly to his feet:

"Damn you," he said, then, but his voice was low and quiet. "I'll live to get you, Merriweather—and I'll get you, if it's the last thing I ever do."

For a moment, eye to eye, judge and prisoner, man to man, they gazed at each other with a tigerish glare. Then the white, cold face of the justice changed on a sudden to a mottled, unhealthy gray. He moistened his thin lips, in his eyes a queer mixture of ruthlessness and a quick, crawling fear. He smiled then—a twisted grimace, gesturing faintly with his white, bony hand. But his eyes, like the eyes of a damned soul, as the prisoner was led away, were fixed, staring, as if, indeed, they saw something that the rest did not.

## CHAPTER TWO

RED DURGAN, otherwise Convict No. 2376, had been a model prisoner. Even the prison guards, hard-bitten, brutal because it was their only rule of life, liked Durgan and went out of their way to favor him, and, contrary to the almost invariable custom in such cases, his fellow-prisoners held him in a like regard.

Twenty years is a long time—a lifetime, as it may chance; many things can happen in twenty years. And constant dropping will wear away the hardest stone.

But in the heart of Red Durgan, behind the white face and the lips that smiled even though the eyes did not, there was a maggot, deep down, eating, eating, like a festering flame. Red Durgan had not forgotten. Even though No. 2376 had been a model prisoner, a trusty now these many

years, white of hair, silent, but as a volcano is silent, he was waiting, nursing his vengeance.

Time off for good behavior had lessened the long stretch; the man known as Prisoner No. 2376 had earned his reputation, and more; he was by now a personal friend of the warden. No one, looking at him, would have taken him for what he was, save for his garment of stripes; a mild, colorless, harmless trusty whose only home was that grim prison-house of steel and stone. And the thought of escape had never, even in a wild jail-break involving the entire prison, entered his mind.

The warden, congratulating him, had patted his shoulder with approving hand.

"You've earned your freedom, Durgan," he said. "And it won't be long—now."

"Yes, sir," the prisoner had answered. "It won't be long."

There had been a something in the accent, the sudden fire in the mild eyes, that had for a moment moved the warden to a strange disquiet. That look in the prisoner's eyes, for instance—it had been, all at once, as if something, deep down, had arisen to peer out of those eyes in a sudden, brief, biting regard. As if a beast, chained and ravening, had for a moment looked out from his cage.

But when the warden looked again the fierce expression was not there.

He shrugged, turning officeward along the narrow hall. The reason of Durgan's perfection of obedience had not been, altogether, from the motive that the warden thought, but that reason had kept No. 2376 rigid to his task. And only once had he swerved, forgetting, from the path.

A new guard had been appointed; a green man recruited from among the "strong-arms" of a mining-camp. Bogash, from the beginning, had not been popular among his fellow convicts; for a new man he was overbearing, crude; six feet in his socks, he was a huge bulk of a man, with the long arms of a gorilla and the deep, arching chest of a bear. From the first the convicts hated him, without stint.

And from the beginning he had picked on Durgan; going out of his way to devil him, openly and by the left hand. But Dur-

gan had "taken" it; taken the bullying with a set, stony face.

"You a trusty," Bogash had sneered. "Innocent, too, I suppose. That's what they all say. But if you want to know what I think, Durgan, you look like a damn stool to me."

It had not been so much the words as the accompanying epithet, vile, debased. And Bogash had called him, Red Durgan, a stool—a stool-pigeon. It was enough.

Like a whip-lash, like a striking snake, even as the big guard had turned, the meek trusty had acted. His fist, behind it the full weight of his muscles that were like willow withes, had struck, full on the point of Bogash's jaw.

The giant had crumpled with the blow, slumping downward in an aimless huddle of sprawling limbs. From the convicts at the long tables—it was the dinner hour—had arisen cat-calls, execrations, in a quick wind of hate, but, following that swift and sudden vengeance, Convict No. 2376, pallid, voiceless, had stood silent, dumb, as the guards rushed over with their threatening clubs.

The warden was a humane man, but he had had no choice; once again in the cell-block Prisoner No. 2376 was left to meditate upon his lot.

The seething cauldron that was his soul had been revealed. Following his encounter with the guard, the warden had relented, restoring to Prisoner No. 2376 his job as trusty. But the white-faced convict no longer was looked upon as just a number, and but little more. And when, as the time for his release drew near, the prison chaplain had visited No. 2376, bringing with him a famous evangelist whose words could bend men to his will whether they would or no, once more the sleeping devil behind Durgan's eyes arose, this time in answer to the droning admonition of the hypnotizer of souls.

"My good man," he had said, "I trust that when you are once more free you will harbor in your heart no thought of evil—that you will go straight. The straight and narrow path, my friend; will you not follow it? And if you harbor in your heart enmity toward another, remember that He

has said: 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay.'"

Convict No. 2376 had not answered his exhorter in words, but the look in the pale eyes had caused the man of God to fall backward two stiff, trembling steps, turning, then, without further speech, to leave him.

"The eyes of a damned soul," he commented to the chaplain; but the latter, wise in his generation, had answered with a slow head shake and a withdrawn, brooding, introspective look.

"The Mills of the Gods," he muttered, half to himself, "the Mills of the Gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small." But aloud he said: "I have been here a long time in this monastery of the hopeless. The convict to whom you have just spoken is but one out of many, and each with his own private hell. You must know them to get under their skins."

But the evangelist, highly offended, went his way, for he was not of those who suffereth understanding. And for Convict No. 2376 there came a day at last, when, a free man once more, he beheld the fresh beauty of the arching sky, the boats upon the river, the train, crawling southward, that was to bear him to the city and to the consummation of that for which he had waited ages long.

Red Durgan was free. Convict No. 2376 had died back there, as to his soul, on the first day of his sentence out of the sun.

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### CHAPTER THREE

**R**ED DURGAN alighted from the train at the Grand Central depot, a stranger in a strange land of noise and movement that was, in his ears, a roaring bedlam of confusion. And times had changed, as he presently discovered, in other ways than in the growth of a great city, almost overnight.

The hang-out that he visited was no more; it had given place to a soft-drink emporium filled, as he could see, with giggling girls; "Tony's Place," a stone's-throw

distant, turned its closed door and shuttered windows like blind eyes to the sun; there was no doubt about it—times *had* changed.

But Red Durgan had not changed, save only in outward appearance, but that indeed was enough, as he was presently to discover. Turning the corner of the short block he had run, almost head on, into a portly figure in the brass buttons and blue uniform of a policeman. That hard face, with its craggy jaw, there could be no mistaking. Patrolman Patterson—"Poison Pat," as he had been called in the old bad days when, as a peterman without a peer, Red Durgan had, on more than one desperate occasion, run foul of the law.

The policeman had not changed a very great deal, save that he was a little older and grayer, with the chevrons of a sergeant upon his sleeve. And Durgan, side-stepping with the speed of light, in obedience to an instinct over which he had no control, waited, his self-deprecatory grin turned to the looming figure with the iron-gray hair.

But Patrolman Patterson had passed onward, with never a backward glance. For he had seen Durgan, if he had seen him at all, as a shabby nondescript merely, an old man with hair that was silvered beneath his ill-fitting hat. As Red Durgan, the man with whom in the past he had done battle, not once, but a dozen times, he had given him scarcely a look.

But Durgan was to have still further proof of his loss of identity.

Beneath the soaring shadows of the "L" there was a small, dingy shop. Time and the march of progress had not availed to banish it; it was still there, and the man who came forward now out of the depths in answer to the bell that had been set ringing by the opening of the door, Durgan recognized upon the instant with a swift intake of the breath.

But the shop-keeper surveyed him in a heavy-lidded calm.

"Well, sir?" he greeted in an aged, toneless voice, in his eyes no recognition of the man facing him across the frosted surface of the showcase top. For the glass of that showcase had not been changed in

thirty years, its original transparency clouded, scratched and marred by the passage of unnumbered nickels and dimes.

Red Durgan was not imaginative, but it came to him on a sudden that his life had been like that: blurred and clouded and marred by the attrition of the years, distorted and out of focus, only he would have phrased it in somewhat different fashion. But he leaned forward now, his pale eyes blazing into those of the man facing him in the dingy shop.

"I want a gun, Looie," he said. "A gat. Say, don't you remember me? Think I'm a ghost?"

The man called Looie moistened his stiff lips.

"Have you got a pistol permit?" he asked. "Because if you ain't, Mister, there's nothing doing—if 'twas to get you to heaven I couldn't fix you up."

The ex-convict made a brief, clucking sound with his tongue.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he made answer. "Twice in the same place."

He leaned forward across the grimy glass, pushing the sleeve back from his right forearm with a quick, impatient jerk.

"Well, what do you know about *that*?" he grated, turning his forearm to the light.

The shop-keeper stared; then, his mouth open, he continued to stare, as if, indeed, he was seeing a ghost. But the mark upon Durgan's forearm had been real; there could be no mistaking; a small, round, white spot burned into the forearm just above the wrist—the hall-mark of the yegg.

The shop-keeper sucked in his breath with a hissing inspiration, his eyes upon another mark upon the bared arm just above: a criss-cross, triangular scar; it had been put there just thirty years in the past, and it had been the mark of the bullet, the trade-mark of "Poison Pat."

"Hell!" exclaimed the shop-keeper. "Red Durgan! Well, what do you know about that? I'd have never tumbled, old-timer." He paused, his little eyes upon Durgan in a speculative, slow stare. "But, say—what do you want with a rod, an' you just out of the band-house—ha? Want to go back

there? Well, now, I wouldn't if I was you."

But at the blazing eyes set in that face, dead-white, he shrugged, without further speech, passing over the gun. The money in hand—and it had been Durgan's entire capital, almost, he stared at the tall figure going out the door. Then once again he shrugged, turning backward into the shadows at the rear.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

**I**N Red Durgan's mind, as he left the grimy store with the pistol in his pocket, there was room for but one thought: the thought of Judge Merriweather. And again, as on the day in the crowded court, he was seeing the high, austere forehead, the trap-like mouth, the eyes that had been like pieces of obsidian, as impersonally cruel as the cold eyes of an Aztec god.

At the Criminal Courts building a guarded inquiry elicited the information that the judge was not in chambers. Durgan, in spite of the fact that no one had appeared to recognize him, was taking no chances. For a short five minutes he hung round the corridors like an uneasy ghost; then he went away.

At the corner of the street he met a man who was able to tell him that the judge had not been sitting for the past month. Where did he live? Northward, beyond the city. But the man had given Durgan a brief, curious look, had hesitated, seemed about to speak, but Durgan had already started.

A long subway ride deposited him in a suburb of scattered houses, old mostly, relics of a departed grandeur that had outlived its time. And before a stone house, ivy-covered and ancient, Durgan halted, keeping in the shadow of the high wall, to peer, after a moment, over it and into a lawn that was sown thick with weeds.

There was a flagged walk leading between trees that were austere, funereal, onward to the house that he could see but dimly. The walk turned, swinging abruptly to the left. Along this walk, as he

crouched behind the wall, there sounded abruptly the tapping of a stick.

Durgan, crouching behind the wall, lifted himself over it, to vault lightly inward, taking cover behind a tree. There was no dogs that he could hear or see; nothing save the nearing tap-tap of the stick. It rang, hollow, upon the flags as Durgan, his hand upon the flat, black shape of the automatic in his pocket, froze, rigid, where he stood.

A figure had turned the corner of the walk. Even at that distance Durgan had recognized the wide, stooped shoulders, the forward-thrusting tilt of the lean jaw—Judge Merriweather. It was the man who had sent him away, without pity and without ruth, to the place from which at the last he had returned, with the maggot in his brain that was like a destroying fire.

Durgan, settling himself in his covert, bent forward like a sprinter upon the mark. The veins in his neck and temples stood out in ridges; he was aware of a quick, eager panting, like a running dog; for a moment he did not recognize it as his own.

But it was the moment for which he had waited; the hour had struck, and—there was the man.

He saw, as in a crimson mist, that stiff figure come onward with the tap-tapping of the cane. One, two, three, four, he counted them—five more. And the tall, stooping figure would soon draw level with the spot where he stood.

But there was a curious lifelessness in the walk; Durgan had time to notice it. A bird, wheeling, had swooped downward, its wings beating in the judge's face, but he had passed on unheeding. A low-hung branch had whipped at his hat, but he had gone ahead as if he had not seen.

At three paces the avenger, stepping from behind his tree-trunk, had swung up his gun; then, with his finger upon the trigger, he halted, went backward two stiff, mincing steps, in his face all at once a queer blend of understanding, of submission—and of something more.

For the stern judge, the upright judge, the man upon whom he had come to execute his vengeance was—blind. Struck by the hand of God; perhaps a punishment for the cruel tortures he had inflicted on innocent men.

"The mills of the gods!" gasped Durgan, as he crept away. "Could I punish him worse than that?"

## THE CAPTURE OF MARJORIE CALLAHAN

**A** CONFESSION that she planned the \$9,000 hold-up of the Tuxedo Bank in Indianapolis, Ind., Nov. 23, forbade any shooting, and later received 10 per cent. of the loot, was made by Marjorie Callahan, 31 years old, under arrest in Detroit.

Miss Callahan was arrested in an automobile by two detectives, Lieutenant Frank E. Fraley and Sergeant William Dresden, with Leroy C. Young, 35 years old, who, she said, was one of the three bandits. The other two are still at liberty, but are expected to be apprehended.

Young and Miss Callahan were held for Indianapolis authorities as fugitives. They were trailed by an Indianapolis detective, who had received a tip from acquaintances of Miss Callahan. They had noted her

strange actions before and after the hold-up.

Miss Callahan, according to Lieutenant Fraley, declared that after buying an automobile with part of the \$900 she received as her share of the loot, she went to Detroit with Young and they pooled their money in a joint savings account.

Acquaintances of Miss Callahan told the Indianapolis detective that they saw her nervously alight from a street car in the neighborhood of the hold-up at the time it was in progress. Later they saw her buy a paper and peruse eagerly the account of the affair. Half-burned fragments of bonds stolen from the bank were discovered in the furnace of the rooming-house where Miss Callahan and Young stayed.

By PETER PERRY

## CHAPTER ONE

MRS. PIKE'S boarding-house was one of those old mansions that have fallen from former splendor into shabby respectability, and from respectability into doubtful repute. The house was in a down-at-the-heels neighborhood, where police calls were frequent, and the clanging gong of the Black Maria and the shriller note of the ambulance no novelty, though always a drawing attraction to the inhabitants. It was Mrs. Pike's excited and resentful voice on the wire that announced to Headquarters that

"The old gent in the parlor bedroom had been stabbed and was bleeding all over the Axminster rug."

A police ambulance rushed the man to the hospital. He was still breathing. Before he died, six hours later, he regained consciousness for a few minutes. His eyes sought the nurse's, and he seemed trying to speak. She bent over him in an effort to catch the lightest whisper, but no sound passed his lips. His right hand moved restlessly over the cover, the fingers twitching nervously. At first the nurse did not notice the movement. But something, perhaps the regularity of its repetition, finally attracted her attention. The man would raise the last three fingers of his right hand, then the index finger alone, pointing up; then again, the three fingers again. After a second he would repeat the motions, barely able now to lift his fingers from the bed-cover. Then, at last, it was a barely perceptible twitching of the muscles. At last the old man lapsed into unconsciousness, the fingers lay still and a little later he ceased to breathe.

These circumstances were all that the nurse could report to Carter Chadwick of the detective bureau when he questioned her the next morning. Chadwick made a note of it.

"It may be he was trying to tell you something. Perhaps he meant three-one-three, whatever that may mean. I'll keep it in mind."

Carter Chadwick was one of the best men on the force. He had been called from his bed at six in the morning and assigned to the case. Sergeant Kelly and the men who had answered Mrs. Pike's call shortly after midnight could tell him very little. They had done practically nothing but get the dying man to the hospital and keep a guard on the place. Nothing had been touched in the room after the police had taken charge. They had immediately ejected the curious, half-clad, frightened crowd of boarders and neighbors, and after removing the dying man had locked the door, pending the arrival of Carter Chadwick. No one had been allowed to leave the place.

This information Sergeant Kelly imparted to Chadwick during the drive out, in the chilly dawn, to Mrs. Pike's house.

"He was an old fellow, about sixty, name of John Elliott, and had been there about a month. No one seems to know much about him or where he came from. It's a front downstairs room—used to be the parlor," Kelly continued. "The door leading into the hall was locked from the inside, the landlady says—Mrs. Pike's her name. She says she thought she heard him groaning, so she went to see if he was sick. He didn't answer, so she unlocked the door with her key and found him dying."

"Were the windows open?" Chadwick asked.

"There's just one big window—in front. It was raised, but the screen is nailed in, and it hasn't been tampered with—nails all rusted in."

"Then how did the murderer get in?"

"Well, that's your job. You're the detective, ain't you?" Kelly grinned. "But I've been wondering some myself. It's the front parlor, as I said. There's big double doors between it and the back parlor. They're locked. But I'd say that's where he got in, if it wasn't that there's a nice young lady has the back parlor. Nobody could have come through there without her knowing it."

"Any chance he killed himself?"

"Not a chance. There isn't a sign of the knife, and he couldn't have hid it after slashing himself like that."

They drew up by the curb in front of Mrs. Pike's house. The yard had been roped off to hold back the curious crowd already gathered. A bluecoat on guard paced up and down the sidewalk. Another did similar duty in the alley at the rear. Inside the hall, another officer stood before the locked door, behind which lay the grim evidence of the tragedy.

Mrs. Pike came forward to meet them, excitedly garrulous and stirred by the sense of her own importance.

"Oh, are you the detective? There's so many of those newspaper fellows nosing around here I've half lost my wits. I never thought nothing like this would ever happen in my house," she complained aggrievedly. "I'm always so particular who I take in. But, then, it happens in the best of families," she consoled herself.

"Yes, yes. Perhaps I had better hear your story first," assented Chadwick. Mentally he added, "The less time a woman has for reflection the less exaggeration and imagination." Aloud he said: "Suppose you tell me all you know about Elliot?"

"Well, when he first came here," I says to myself, 'That man's worrying about something,' I says. He didn't like to stay by himself—always watching the doors, nervous like."

"Perhaps you imagine that—after what

has happened." Chadwick could not refrain from expressing the thought.

"I do not!" retorted Mrs. Pike stoutly. "I don't imagine nothing. Didn't he always sleep with a revolver under his pillow, and wasn't he always complaining about that downstairs window being so easy to get into? Wanted an upstairs room, he did, but I hadn't none vacant."

"How long has he been here?"

"Just a month. He paid me last week for next month in advance—good pay, he was, and no kicking, and as nice and refined an old gent as I ever seen—quiet and no trouble."

"Did he work anywhere? What did he do for a living?"

"No; he didn't do nothing—said he had a little income. It wasn't any of my business to ask him questions. He just stayed around the place most of the time. He was old, you know, and looked kind of sickly, too."

"Yes. And now tell me what happened last night."

"Well, I seen he wasn't feeling well. He went and locked himself in his room right after dinner, and I heard him walking up and down. I went and asked him if there was anything he wanted. He just opened the door a tiny crack, but I seen he was packing his trunk. And I asked him if he was leaving and he said 'No.'"

"Did he have any visitors last night or recently?" asked Chadwick.

"Ain't nobody been to see him since he's been here—not that I know of, anyway. Nobody came last night, I know, because my room is right down the hall, and I had the door open a 'bit, kind of listening, on account of Mr. Elliot acting so peculiar. And along in the night I thought I heard him groaning, and I went to the door and called him, thinking he might be sick. And then, when he didn't answer, I got worried, and I got my keys and opened the door."

"He had it locked on the inside? Are you sure?"

"Yes; of course I'm sure," Mrs. Pike returned firmly. "I had to poke his key out before I could get mine in, and I heard it fall on the floor."

"And then?"

"I turned on the light, and there he lay. Oh Lord! I just screamed and screamed. And everybody come running."

"Was anything disturbed in the room—any sign of a fight or struggle?"

"No; everything was just as usual—except that pistol of his, that he always keeps under his pillow, was over in the corner on the floor. I didn't hear any fighting or racket, either."

"There were no strangers in the house? What do you know about your other boarders?"

"They're all respectable, hard-working ladies and gents," Mrs. Pike retorted with spirit.

"Of course," Chadwick agreed soothingly. "But tell me about them."

"Well, downstairs, there's Jim Harris, a young feller. He may be a bit wild now and then, but he's smart and clever. He's sort of an automobile racer—he's been laid up with a sprained ankle since last Sunday. Then, there's Miss Haynes—she's got the back-parlor bedroom—"

"The room back of Elliot's?"

"Yes. There's sliding doors between, but they're locked, of course."

"How long has Miss Haynes been here?"

"Just two weeks. She's a smart business-like woman. I liked her the minute I set eyes on her. Then, upstairs there's Mr. Dorsey—he works on the railroad—been with me for years. And Mrs. Jenkins—she does housework by the day for folks." And so Mrs. Pike continued through the list of her dozen or so boarders.

"I'd like to question them all a few minutes before they leave the house—I hope it won't be necessary to detain any of them," Chadwick told her.

"They'll be down to breakfast pretty soon," the landlady replied, "if that will suit you."

"It will," Chadwick answered. "And in the meantime we'll have a look at the room." He turned to Kelly, who unlocked the door at the left of the hall leading into the room where Elliot had been murdered.

The officer on guard threw open the door, which had been locked since the re-

moval of the dying man. An exclamation of surprise burst from Kelly's lips.

"There's been some one in here," he cried.

## CHAPTER TWO

CHADWICK, at the threshold, glanced quickly over the interior. It was a dark, gloomy, high-ceiled room, with the golden oak woodwork of the 'eighties. An elaborately carved mantel, with a cracked mirror, adorned the wall opposite the door. The fireplace had been sealed up—no doubt through Mrs. Pike's economy. At the left a single window opened onto the front porch. At the right, the headboard against the folding doors, stood the bed, with its dark gruesome stains.

But to Kelly's dismay the room was in the utmost disorder. Clothing and papers were littered over the floor. The drawers of the dresser had been hurriedly emptied, their contents scattered. The trunk in one corner had been ransacked.

"Hey! There's been somebody in here. The room has been plundered in the last hour," Kelly shouted angrily to the officer who had stood guard before the door. "What does this mean, O'Brien?"

"What the devil do I know about it?" exclaimed O'Brien, staring at the disorder before him. "I haven't stirred a foot from the other side of the door."

"There was nothing disturbed in the room when I left here this morning—no sign of a struggle or nothing," Kelly declared. "I just went home for my breakfast, and now look at the mess it's in."

"The murderer has been back—he was looking for money or papers. He came back because he was disturbed at the time of the murder. He cannot be far away now." Chadwick summed up the situation in short, crisp sentences. "Also; there is some other entrance to this room."

But obviously there was no secret panel or trap-door in the plain, plastered walls and ceiling. It was an ordinary commonplace house—there could be no mystery in its construction. The window screen had

not been removed, and the chimney was securely sealed; an officer had guarded the hall door. By elimination, it seemed the only means of entrance possible was the folding doors. But they were locked and, furthermore, gave into a room occupied by a woman.

"And never a soul has been in or out of that back-parlor bedroom, either, sorr," said O'Brien. "I've had my eye on all the doors in the hall."

"Miss Haynes has been in her room all the time, then," said Sergeant Kelly. "She was in the hall, frightened to death like the rest of them when we first came. I sent her back to her room and haven't seen her since. 'Tisn't likely any one could get through that way without her knowing it."

"No," Chadwick admitted. "Still, it seems the only possible way our visitor could have got in. Besides, Miss Haynes may have something to do with it herself, you know."

"A woman?" Kelly snorted. "'Tisn't likely. A woman shoots, most generally."

"I didn't say a woman did it," returned Chadwick. "But she might have aided the murderer in entering and escaping."

Miss Haynes was not one of the nervous little group who chattered excitedly in Mrs. Pike's dining-room that morning. Chadwick questioned them, and learning nothing new gave them permission to go about their business. They soon left the house, with the exception of Jim Harris, who hobbled across the hall on crutches to his room. Chadwick, watching him, reflected that there was something peculiar in the way he held his sprained and bandaged ankle. But he turned his attention to the more important consideration of Miss Haynes. She had been completely unnerved by last night's affair, according to Mrs. Pike, and had ordered breakfast in her room. Chadwick rapped at her door, determined to delay his investigation no longer.

A soft, contralto voice answered him: "Come in."

A young woman, with a mop of tousled bobbed hair, lay propped up on pillows in the darkened room. She was a blonde, by natural pigment, fair of skin and hair. Her blue eyes met Chadwick's candidly.

Her fluffy silver-gilt hair framed her face in becoming disarray and gave her a youthful, girlish charm. But there was nothing childish or doll-like about her. She was a mature woman of thirty or more, with rather large, strong features and a chin that bespoke determination.

Chadwick stated his business without delay.

"May I question you?" She nodded assent. "What is your name?"

"Ella Haynes."

"What do you do?"

"I am a clerk at Daley's."

"How long have you worked there?"

"Just two weeks."

"Where are you from?"

"I came here from St. Louis."

"Do you know this man who was killed—John Elliot?"

"No. I saw him a few times at meals—that is all. I never spoke to him—except to say good-morning. Oh, please don't ask me about that." The girl shuddered and covered her face with her hands.

Chadwick reflected that she did not look to be the kind of woman to become hysterical.

"Was there any one else in your room last night?" he asked sharply.

"No, no," she replied, frightened.

"Did any one pass through those doors last night?" Chadwick demanded, jerking his head at the folding doors that stood between them and the scene of the tragedy. The girl could only shake her head in terrified denial, her face turned away from him toward the wall. "Come, Miss Haynes," Chadwick remonstrated sternly, "what do you know about this affair? What did you hear in that room last night? Answer me!"

"Oh, please, please! I can't stand it!" There was a deeper note of passion in her voice.

"You must pull yourself together, Miss Haynes," Chadwick commanded not unkindly. "If you know anything about it, if you heard any sound from that room, it would be better to tell me now. You need not be frightened. If you know nothing of value I will keep your name out of the case."

The woman made an effort to control herself.

"But I know nothing," she assured him. "I heard nothing until Mrs. Pike screamed. I ran out into the hall—that's all."

"Could any one have entered your room last night without your knowing it?"

"No, of course not."

"Are you sure? Was your door locked?"

"No, it wasn't locked; Mrs. Pike didn't have a key."

"Do you sleep soundly?"

"Yes."

Chadwick crossed to the folding doors and examined them. On the other side stood the head of John Elliot's bed. By sliding the doors open, the murderer could have reached in and stabbed the sleeping man from where he stood. And only a few feet away to the left the other door opened into the hall, while the girl's bed was on the opposite side of the room. It would have been just possible for some one to slip across the corner of the room there without awaking her.

"I must ask permission to make an examination of your room, Miss Haynes," he said, turning again to the girl, who lay with face averted in the darkest corner of the bed.

"If you will wait until I get dressed," she assented dully.

Chadwick bowed and left the room.

Twenty minutes later he knocked at her door again. There was no reply. He rapped louder. Then he turned the knob—it yielded to his grasp. He opened the door and looked in. The room was empty.

### CHAPTER THREE

CHADWICK rushed in, dismayed. He had let the girl trick him. The room was as before, the shades drawn. But one of the two windows at the side of the house was open—she had escaped that way—an easy drop to the ground. There were only a few feet of space between Mrs. Pike's house and the adjoining one. She could easily have reached the front of the house

without being seen by the guard, if he were at the opposite end of his beat. Then she could have passed him unnoticed and unquestioned. It was all quite simple.

Chadwick called in Sergeant Kelly. They sent a description of Ella Haynes to Headquarters. She could not get very far away with only twenty minutes' start and every officer in town on the lookout for her.

"Undoubtedly, she knows something about the crime," was Chadwick's opinion. "Perhaps she is shielding some one."

They searched her room, but nothing incriminating was to be found; in fact, surprisingly little of anything—only a few very ordinary dresses hanging in the old-fashioned wardrobe, a few pieces of underwear, a few cheap toilet articles, a stack of popular magazines and old newspapers—that was all—no letters or pictures or anything of a personal nature that would afford them a clue to her identity.

Then O'Brien, who was still stationed in the hall outside, rushed in, beaming and elated over a discovery he had made.

"Say, this bird, Jim Harris, that's got that room across the hall, and is going about on crutches, you know? Well, when he gets inside his room he walks on both feet. Sure, I've been listening to him all the morning—there's something crooked there."

"But we can't arrest a man for using crutches when he doesn't need them," protested Chadwick. "I'll leave that part of the investigation to you, O'Brien."

"Yes, sorr," O'Brien returned gloomily to his post in the hall.

Chadwick spent the better part of a week trying to locate Ella Haynes. It was true that she had worked at the department store, as she said, but she had not returned there since the day of the murder. No taxi driver in the city had had a fare of her description. Chadwick wished fervently that he had observed her more closely. She had seemed to evade scrutiny in the darkened room. But he had had a good description of her from Mrs. Pike and several others. And in spite of all the efforts of the force and, though she was far from ordinary in appearance, Ella Haynes had vanished as mysteriously as fog in the sunshine.

## CHAPTER FOUR

CHADWICK, frustrated in his pursuit of the missing woman, was forced to fall back on less promising clues. The only tangible thing seemed to be the strange movements of the dying man's hands. If he had been trying to impart some information, it certainly concerned the number 313. Chadwick set a squad of men to work investigating house numbers, telephone numbers, automobile numbers, room numbers in hotel and office buildings and so forth, but the result was exactly nothing. Chadwick himself went through Elliot's effects; but there was nothing that afforded any information regarding either himself, his friends or his enemies. He was, seemingly, a man without connections. No one came forward to identify or bury him.

Then, in an effort to learn something of the murdered man's past, Chadwick advertised a description of Elliot in the newspapers throughout the country. A reply came from Chicago from a young man claiming to be Elliot's nephew, Stanford Robinson. Chadwick met him at the station when he arrived two days later.

Robinson was a dark-haired, well-dressed young man of medium build. Chadwick liked him immediately. He promptly identified John Elliot as his uncle, even recalling a scar which had not been mentioned in the advertisement. But he knew little of John Elliot's life. His uncle had been a wanderer, the black sheep of the family. He knew nothing of his business or his friends or enemies.

Stanford Robinson attended the funeral of his uncle. And on the following day he requested Elliot's effects from Chadwick. But there was nothing of value for Chadwick to turn over except about twenty dollars in currency found in the dead man's wallet. The clothing and papers Chadwick insisted on keeping until the mystery of Elliot's death was solved. Robinson remonstrated, but Chadwick pointed out their possible value in solving the crime, and the younger man was forced to acquiesce. He returned to his home disappointed,

as it was clear that he had expected at least some small inheritance.

A report from Chicago concerning Stanford Robinson showed that he was exactly what he had claimed to be, a clerk in a broker's office, a position he had held satisfactorily for several years.

## CHAPTER FIVE

ON the tenth day after the murder of John Elliot, Mrs. Pike again complained to Headquarters that the dead man's room had been entered mysteriously during the night and was ransacked, the carpet torn up, the mattress cut open, the upholstery of an old Morris chair slashed to ribbons. Chadwick, arriving there, found that the mauler had indeed made havoc of the room.

"That settles it," he concluded. "I ought to have known it before. The murderer didn't get what he wanted. It may still be here—whatever it is—if he didn't find it last night."

Systematically he set to work taking up the floor and the woodwork of the room, much to the indignation of Mrs. Pike. The metal grille over the hot-air register was unscrewed from the wall. Reaching his arm down into the opening, Chadwick touched the accumulated dust and lint piled up in the right-angled bend of the pipe. Fingering the fluffy mass, he picked up something metallic—a key. He took it to the light of the window and blew the dust from it. It was a key to a safe deposit box in the Citizens National Bank, and the number was 313.

Elated, Chadwick quickly drove to the bank. There he learned that the box opened by the key 313 was held by a man named John Ellison. The officers of the bank knew nothing else about him except that he had rented it about a month ago. Chadwick was admitted to the vault. An attendant unlocked the box corresponding to key 313. It was filled to the brim with gold and currency amounting to fifty thousand dollars.

Here, then, was the secret of John Elliot's life, the cause of his death, the information he had tried to impart to the nurse in his last moments of consciousness, and the reason his nephew was so anxious to obtain possession of his belongings. Stanford Robinson had perhaps suspected his uncle of hoarding a fortune, or had heard of his miserly habits. He, as the sole heir, would of course inherit the property of his uncle. But Chadwick did not notify him of his good fortune immediately, as he did not wish the news made public at the present time.

The detective counted on the murderer returning in search of the key or some clue to the hiding place of the fortune, and laid his plans accordingly. He cut a tiny opening in the ceiling of the room through to the floor of the room above, where a man could watch unseen by day and night. But the murderer must have become alarmed, and it seemed for a time as if their close watch must go unrewarded.

Chadwick continued the search for Ella Haynes. He could not believe a woman had committed such a crime, but she must have had some knowledge of it. Chadwick was still convinced that the murderer had entered through her room, either with or without her permission.

Then one day, strangely enough, Ella Haynes walked up the front steps and into Mrs. Pike's boarding-house. The detective, who happened to be standing with O'Brien in the hall above, heard Mrs. Pike's surprised ejaculation.

"My sakes, Miss Haynes, didn't you know that the police were looking for you?"

"I didn't until yesterday," Miss Haynes replied evenly, in her low voice. "That's why I came back today."

"Where have you been?" Mrs. Pike asked suspiciously.

"At a relative's in the country. I have been ill since I left here. I was not allowed to see the newspapers until yesterday."

"But why did you run off like that?" Mrs. Pike persisted in her cross-examination.

"I had to get away—I have been subject to nervous attacks since I had a breakdown a few years ago. May I have my room back?" she changed the subject deftly.

"Land sakes, yes—if you want it. Won't nobody stay in this house any more," Mrs. Pike complained. "I don't know how I'm to make a living now. Your room's just like when you left."

The two women entered the room then, and Chadwick and O'Brien, listening above, heard no more.

"Ain't you going to pinch her now?" O'Brien urged.

"No," Chadwick decided promptly. "If she is innocent she will not run away again. If not, it is better to give her rope enough to hang herself. And I shall keep watch on John Elliot's room tonight myself."

"Have you got another hunch now?" asked O'Brien.

"Yes. But it is too preposterous to be true, I think," replied the Headquarters man with a short laugh. "You and Kelly keep watch somewhere below tonight. Be ready if I want you."

"Sure; I'll be in Harris's room across the hall," O'Brien answered.

"Harris? Oh, yes; did you ever find out about that sprained ankle of his?" asked Chadwick.

O'Brien grinned sheepishly.

"I was hoping you wouldn't ask me. I guess I'm a helluva detective. I come mighty near arresting him one day. But he confessed——"

"Confessed, did he? Confessed to what?"

"That he was collecting accident insurance—so he limped around a few days longer than necessary—that's all."

Chadwick chuckled at O'Brien's discomfiture.

"Cheer up, old top," he said. "I get ninety-nine bum hunches to one good one myself right along."

"Well, Harris is a good kid. I'll be in his room tonight," O'Brien said as he left the room, "shooting craps," he added, grinning back at his superior as he closed the door.

## CHAPTER SIX

**I**N the middle of the night, Chadwick, peering down through the tiny opening in the floor of the room directly above Mrs. Pike's front-parlor bedroom, where John Elliott had been killed, saw the beams of an electric flashlight darted about below, heard the stealthy footsteps of the mysterious intruder, who was searching for the key to John Elliott's strongbox.

Chadwick stole noiselessly down the steps and summoned O'Brien and Sergeant Kelly by a soft tap at Harris's door. The three officers, followed by Harris, crossed the hall. Kelly turned the knob, but the door did not give. A chair had been propped against it from the inside.

"Quick. Break it down," Chadwick ordered.

The men broke into the room, flooding it with the glare of their electric torches. But there was no one. The room was empty.

Chadwick did not seem surprised.

"This way," he whispered. With a key he swiftly unlocked the folding doors at the head of Elliott's bed and entered Miss Haynes's room.

The girl sat up in bed, screaming shrilly. Chadwick turned on the lights.

"What's the idea of this?" protested O'Brien.

Chadwick walked over to Ella Haynes's bed. She gazed at him terrified, the sheet drawn up around her neck, half covering her face, only the fair bobbed hair and frightened eyes showing above. Chadwick's hand darted out and made a snatch at the blonde curls. They came off in his hand, revealing close-cropped dark hair beneath.

"Stanford Robinson!" O'Brien exclaimed. "If it ain't himself wearing a wig. Holy Mikel!"

"I thought I recognized the voice," Chadwick explained. "Also I learned that five years ago Robinson was an actor of female character parts in a small stock company. The lure of Elliot's gold has brought him back here once too often. This is the third time he has returned after he had got safely away unsuspected. We would never have found 'Ella Haynes.' But Elliot's fortune drew him back, first, as himself, Stanford Robinson, posing as Elliot's nephew; then unseen in the night to search Elliot's room, and now as 'Ella Haynes' again." Then turning to the man in the bed: "Stanford Robinson, I arrest you for the murder of John Elliot. Have you anything to say?"

The young man was in a panic. All his nerve left him. He saw that denial was useless and cunningly figured that his best course lay in honest confession.

"I didn't mean to kill him," he whined. "I never did an unlawful act in my life till I fell in with that man. He wasn't my uncle. John Ellison was his real name. He was a crook. We worked a bunco game together in Chicago and were to split fifty-fifty. But he beat it with the whole of the swag. I quit my job and followed him. That's why I got a woman's rig this time. I was going to search his room while he was out; but he had hidden the loot. Then he got on to me and was packing up to leave that night—going to give me the slip again. I went in to scare it out of him, but he drew that gun on me. And all I had was the knife, so I let him have it. That's all."

Robinson's confession saved his neck, but it got him a life term in the State's prison.

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FAKED \$100 BILLS

**I**N an expensive room in one of the most luxurious hotels in Paris, police believe they have found the source of a flood of spurious \$100 bills which have struck Paris recently, causing American currency to be regarded with great suspicion.

A large department store was one of the

greatest sufferers. It set a special detective to work with city police. The trail led to the hotel, where police found in a closet more than \$100,000 in "queer" money. Four men with various aliases, but all hailing from Central European countries, were arrested.

# Two-Gun Musses the Play

By EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER

"FIVE thousand," Chet Taylor murmured, as he snapped a rubber band about the bundle of crisp bills he had just finished counting.

"Five thousand?" a chuckling voice echoed. "Then fork it over, son, an' fork it pronto!"

Chet jerked his head up and his lower jaw sagged. It was noontime, and he was alone in the bank; all the other bank clerks had gone home to their dinners. Facing him through the wicket was a masked man, his Stetson hat pulled down so as to shadow his eyes and the lower part of his face concealed in a blue bandanna handkerchief. Two vicious-looking .45 revolvers were silently saying volumes. Chet stood as if paralyzed, staring wide-eyed.

"I'm in one heluva hurry," Two-gun Lawson explained dryly. "I really ain't got long to linger with you, son, so fork over ther kale. I got a date I just can't be late fer, so wake up an' git busy. Savvy?" He paused and his eyes twinkled. "Better let me in ther cage. Quick!"

A significant movement of the .45s caused Chet to unlock the cage door with celerity.

"Now, it's a little game of put an' take we're goin' to play, young feller," Two-gun chuckled. "I'm goin' to put you in ther nice little vault an' then I'm goin' to take all ther root of evil in sight. See?"

With the muzzles of the guns in his ribs, Chet realized that resistance was useless. He entered the vault reluctantly.

"There ain't no danger fer you," Two-gun reassured him, "as long as you do as I tell you. Into ther vault with you. Ther folks'll be back soon, an' I'll help ther game along by leavin' 'em a note tellin' 'em where to find you. That's all there's to it."

"Thanks," Chet answered sarcastically as the vault door slammed upon him.

Very quickly Two-gun gathered up all the paper money in sight and stuffed it into waiting saddle-bags, then he took a blue pencil and began scrawling a note.

"You'll find the young guy in the vault," he mumbled as he wrote, his tongue in his cheek. "I put him in there fer safe-keep-in'." Two-gun grinned. "I took him by surprise, and he didn't have no chance to git me. He's young and he's good-lookin', an' I just got him outa harm's way. See? I set in on yer little game and I'm cleanin' up fer fair. My winnin' ought to figger around ten thousand, and at that you ali are gittin' off easy, I'd say, 'cause I'm liftin' only the paper, as the coin's too heavy to tote. I'm traveling fast and I'm traveling light. Adios!"

He tucked the finished scrawl prominently in the cashier's window and left the bank closing the door behind him. With a hurried glance in all directions, he leaped into his saddle and went loping leisurely down the deserted street to the hills in the north.

"That sure was easy," Two-gun was chuckling as he left the town behind him and urged his mount into a gallop, his pony's hoofs ringing musically upon the frost-hardened earth. "As I figger it, I'm havin' at least an hour's start, an' that's more'n I need ter throw 'em off my trail. If I beat 'em to the hills ther sheriff an' his gang might as well kiss theirselves good-by."

Five hours later he had reached the rolling hills in safety, and the long shadows of the early winter dusk were reaching out and filling the valleys with velvet gloom. A chill wind went sighing by and there were no stars.

"By ther Lord Harry!" Two-gun ejaculated, as the pony's regular gallop broke and the animal suddenly went lame. "By ther Lord Harry, ther cayuse is limpin', an' limpin' bad! Here's one swell howdy-do, I'm sayin'."

He tumbled from the saddle to discover that the pony's right forefoot had been badly cut and bruised by a stone.

"Poor devil!" Two-gun muttered, patting the animal's neck. "This is hell fer both or us."

Swinging the saddle with its money-laden saddle-bags over his shoulder, so as to relieve the pony of the burden, and leading the animal, he moved forward slowly through the thickening shadows, ever casting furtive glances behind him, pausing now and then to listen, but always going on reassured.

"Fine stuff!" Two-gun wheezed as he topped a ridge and paused to peer down into the valley. "Things seem to be lookin' up some."

Cautiously he led his horse down the long slope covered with rustling dead grass and drew near the light that had given him new courage. As he approached he made out a cabin and a shed-like outbuilding, misshapen things in the darkness. A dog commenced barking furiously and ran toward him. In passing the shed he made out the forms of two horses and a cow in separate stalls. Leaving his mount with the reins trailing, he hurried to the house. As he passed the lighted window he peered inside, but a curtain of some white material prevented his getting a glimpse of the interior. He rapped upon the door with the butt of his gun.

"I need a horse, an' I——" he began gruffly.

"Come in!" a woman's weary voice interrupted.

Two-gun lifted the latch, pushed the door open and stood blinking upon the threshold. The room was small, the log-walls bare and the rafters exposed. White curtains hung at the two windows. Geraniums in shiny old tomato-cans were blooming on the window-sills. A wood fire was crackling in the open gate and an oil-lamp was burning

on the table, which was covered with a red-and-white checked oilcloth. A rag rug partly hid the rough boards of the floor. A young woman with a baby on her lap stared up at him from where she sat by a rude cot that had been drawn close to the fire. Upon the cot, under a patch-work quilt, lay the gaunt form of a man, whose face was hideously white, in striking contrast to the blackness of his stubble of beard. The sorrow in the woman's tear-stained face, the agony in the depths of her eyes, caused Two-gun to pause irresolutely.

"Thank the Lord!" the woman breathed brokenly. "I've been prayin' an' prayin' fer hours fer somebody to come. I've been——"

"I'm hungry," Two-gun broke in. "I'm mighty hungry, an' my pony's gone lame. I'm in one big hustle to git along. I can't——"

"You'll find somethin' to eat in the cupboard," the woman directed, turning her eyes once more to the man on the cot, "an' there's coffee in the corner of the fireplace."

"What's ailin' him?" Two-gun asked, as he took some cornbread and baked beans from the cupboard and began eating ravenously.

"He's been like this ever since the middle of the afternoon," she explained in a dead voice. "Cal was breakin' the pie-bald colt. The animal got mean, er Cal got careless, an' he was throwed. He hit the ground on his head an' back after bumpin' the side of the shed. He ain't been hisself since, an' he ain't said a word. I'm afeered there's somethin' wrong with his spine."

"The middle of the afternoon?" Two-gun asked, his mouth full of food. "That's goin' on four hours."

"Four hours," she agreed in choked tones.

For some reason or other Two-gun's hunger slipped from him as he stood staring down at the little group. There was a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"What did the doc say?" he demanded.

"He ain't had no doctor," she replied.

"Ain't had no doc?"

"I couldn't leave him here alone," she explained. "Then the baby got feverish an'

I couldn't go nohow. I couldn't take the baby, an' I couldn't leave it here. I've been tied here; so I've been prayin' an' now you've come, an' there ain't no time to lose. The Lord sent you, an' you gotta git a doctor," she ended with finality.

"The Lord's sent me?" Two-gun voiced his surprise.

"To fetch the doctor," she answered simply.

"Me?" Two-gun queried, his lean face twitching.

"There ain't nobody else," she retorted. "I ain't been able to go; I gotta look after the baby an' him, too." She indicated her husband. "I gotta stay here. I'd a-been gone long afore this if I coulda got away. What you waitin' fer?" she asked. "There ain't no time to lose."

"An' ther nearest medicine man?" Two-gun queried in spite of himself.

"The nearest, an' the only one I know about," she answered, "is Doc Miller over in Three Stars."

"Three Stars?" Two-gun gasped, motioning in the general direction from which he had come.

The woman nodded. Then the baby in her lap began to twist and squirm and breathe convulsively. The mother soothed it with soft crooning, rubbed its little pain-racked body and wrapped it in warm blankets. The child became quiet.

"Hurry! Hurry!" the woman pleaded.

"I'll be goin'," Two-gun murmured as he moved to the door. "I'm goin' to beat it away from here."

"Take the roan," the woman advised. "He's fast an' the colt ain't broke. An', remember, there ain't no time to lose at all."

"There sure ain't," Two-gun agreed as the door closed upon him.

When Two-gun rode back into Three Stars some time after midnight the roan was white with lather, and blood-flecked foam was flying from his muzzle. As he passed the bank a poster caught Two-gun's attention. Leaning from the saddle, he read it over slowly. Then, taking the poster, he folded it carefully and tucked it away in the pocket of his shirt.

Doctor Miller himself answered Two-

gun's imperative knocking. He was not at all pleased at being routed out of his warm bed.

"I can't go," Miller snapped when Two-gun told him what he wanted. "My patients here need me."

"This is a man an' a kid, both very sick," Two-gun explained.

"I must stay here."

"It's life an' death," Two-gun insisted.

"I won't go!"

"Like hell you won't!" Two-gun snarled, drawing a .45 and pushing it into the doctor's face. "Come along or there'll be a new sawbones in Three Stars."

The gun was argument enough, and soon they were on the back trail, galloping through the night side by side upon two horses taken from the doctor's stable, where Two-gun had placed the winded roan. From her bedroom Doctor Miller's wife watched her husband being compelled to ride away and very quickly spread the alarm.

It was early dawn before Two-gun and the physician were in the hills, and not very far behind them the sheriff and his posse were following hot-foot upon their trail.

"Now hustle inside!" Two-gun ordered as they tumbled stiffly from their saddles at the cabin door. "Feelin' better now that you're here?"

Doctor Miller snorted.

"Remember this," Two-gun snapped: "if the kid er his daddy croaks you'll be followin' 'em to helloland pronto. Savvy?"

Miller nodded as Two-gun tapped his .45s meaningly.

"Yer work's waitin'," Two-gun growled.

The doctor entered the cabin with his medicine-kit and Two-gun led the sweat-coated horses to the shed.

"We sure used up a lot of time," Two-gun grumbled as he shifted his saddle back to his own nag and hid his saddle-bags. "The sheriff can't be anyways far behind, an' I got one swell chance fer a getaway, believe me. My pony's hobblin' on three legs, the colt ain't broke yet, an' ther horses we just rode in on are blown. I'm up agin it good, I'd say."

He stole into the cabin on tiptoe. The

woman's eyes spoke her thanks to him. The doctor was absorbed in his examination of the injured man; the baby was already sleeping peacefully and breathing easily.

"How's things, Doc?" Two-gun whispered.

"The baby's doing fine, entirely out of danger," Miller replied in a low tone. "The man's condition is serious. Concussion, I'm afraid, and some trouble with the spine. We'll have to get him back to Three Stars and then into a hospital. I'm doing my darnedest but that's not enough. The sooner we get him out of this the better. We'll need help to——"

"You're gittin' it," Two-gun interrupted, going to the window and drawing aside the curtain so as to peer out. "You sure are."

There came the sharp ringing of horses' hoofs, the metallic jingling of spurs, and the babel of men's hoarse voices.

"Take this!" Two-gun went to the woman and pressed a folded paper into her trembling hands. "It'll come in handy, I'm thinkin', fer ther old man an' ther kid. Mum's ther word for a while. Savvy? When all ther excitement blows over take a peep into the feed-box in ther shed. See?"

Then Two-gun was gone.

"It's the sheriff," Miller exclaimed, turning away from the window to his patient. "We're playing in luck. I'll have him send a wagon out for your husband."

"Th' sheriff?" she asked in perplexed wonder.

But the physician became lost in his case and failed to hear her. With blanched cheeks the woman stood leaning above her husband and listening to what was going on outside.

"Stop, Two-gun!" she heard a harsh voice command. "You ain't got the ghost of a chance of givin' us the slip. You plumb fooled us yesterday, but today's another story. We've got the drop on you. It's suicide fer you to start anything. You're at ther jumpin'-off place. Keep your hands off them guns er we'll feel compelled to ventilate you. That's the wise bird, Two-gun. You got sense enough to know when you're beat. Up with yer hands! Higher!"

"You win, I reckon," Two-gun sneered. "You cop ther bacon this time, sheriff. I reckon I must be gittin' too damned soft fer this game. I sure done mussed this play. Anyway, where do we go from here?"

"Over the hills," the sheriff laughed; "the state's got a little room reserved fer you, Two-gun, in one of its best-known hotels."

"Righto!" Two-gun smiled grimly. "Let's go!"

Mechanically the woman unfolded the paper which Two-gun had thrust into her hands and read it through gathering tears:

#### REWARD!

One thousand dollars will be paid for the return of the money taken from the Three Stars National Bank—One thousand dollars reward and no questions asked!

"May the good Lord be kind to him," she murmured. "The feed-box in the shed! He was right. It sure will come in handy."

Then a shadow fell across the window as Two-gun, with his hands shackled behind him, started back to Three Stars in the company of the sheriff.

### CAREER OF "THE CHICAGO WIDOW"

**M**ISS MARJORIE McBRIDE, who has many aliases and whose operations in college cities have gained her the title in police circles of "The Chicago Widow," pleaded guilty to two charges of larceny in District Court, Northampton, Mass., and was sentenced to an indeterminate term in the Sherborne reformatory.

She was accused of larceny from the First National Bank of Amherst and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Her operations by means of forged checks are said to have extended over a long period.

She was located recently in a Boston Hospital by State Detective J. V. Daly by means of the fingerprint system.

# Too Many Keys

By J. B. WARRENTON

THE night was dark, and Cokey Slane crept forward cautiously in the shadow of the darkened houses lining the avenue.

Before the yawning mouth of a dimly lit alley where one chattering arc-light emitted its spluttering rays he paused and glanced furtively about the silent street, then plunged into the alley and was lost from view.

"One, two, three," and to eleven, Cokey mumbled as he glided by the tradesman's gates at the rear. At number eleven he paused and listened intently. As a broken carbon from the arc-light fell to the macadam with a clattering jingle he uttered a smothered curse. Then with the agility of a feline prowler he climbed over the fence, dropping lightly on the other side. Again he listened, but all was still. Even the arc-light had ceased its spluttering.

Step by step and as silently as a fox moves through the woodland, Cokey Slane tiptoed across the brick-paved yard to the back door of a house. It was but the work of a few moments for a formidable steel jimmy in his dexterous hands to force the door. He stepped inside.

In the inky darkness he paused and sniffed the air. Why should it not be heavy and musty? Were not the Harringtons away for the summer? Was it not known through the mysterious channels of the underworld that they were to return in a few days? And that the gold and silver plate, priceless antiques, were delivered at the house that day from the Central Safety Deposit Vaults?

Cokey's robbery was planned for the following night. He was a "snow bird," a cheap "gun," who fed his dope-primed nerves by picking pockets and doubled-

crossed his pards by pulling off the coup alone ahead of time.

He chuckled as he thought how his spurious telegram had sent the only guard, a man servant, hurrying to the Harringtons' summer home.

And in the darkness his grin was supplanted by a wolfish snarl.

"I'm only a cheap 'stall,' eh?" he gritted. "I'll show my pals I'm slicker'n they are."

With velvet-tread the nocturnal marauder climbed the dusty stairs to the kitchen above. Then he went through the swinging doors into the dining-room. There he hesitated and listened again. The silence was grave-like. Not even a clock ticked. Through the semi-gloom he discerned a door ajar at the farther side of the room. He glided across the room with padded steps, then brought his flashlight into play and moved its narrow ray about the interior.

"Ah!" exclaimed Cokey Slane.

The penetrating gleam was now focused on an open brass-bound chest in the corner. It was the chest he had seen from a doorway across the street as the men carried it into the house that afternoon. The chest contained the Harringtons' valuable silverware.

With a few quick strides he was across the room and kneeling beside the box. Then something happened. With an oath Cokey sprang erect, clawing for his gun as he whirled. Too late! The room was flooded with light. Cokey's ratty eyes blinked and he gasped. A man was seated beside a desk in the corner, a leering smile on his handsome features as he pointed a sinister automatic at the startled burglar.

"The roof is the limit, my dear sir," drawled the figure behind the gun, "so keep

your hands well elevated. This is indeed a pleasant surprise. You must have seen my butler going out."

Slane was speechless and powerless as well. His butler! Then the seated man must be Janson Harrington! Cokey was a failure in his first house-breaking job. How the yeggs he double-crossed would curse him when they heard the news. He was aroused from his turbulent thoughts by the seated man.

"Speechless?" he sneered. "New at the game—am I right?"

Cokey, who was slowly resigning himself to the inevitable, started as a new thought was born in his shocked mind. To escape by force was not possible. Only one refuge remained—diplomacy. He braced himself for the ordeal. The calmness with which he conducted himself in the emergency was evidence of his stamina in a time of crisis.

"Youse is right, Mr. Harrington," he whined. "Dis is my first job—hope ter die if it isn't, boss. I wus broke an' nearly starving—hope ter die if I wasn't, boss. If you'll let me——"

The seated man checked the crook's fawning entreaty with an impatient wave of his hand.

"Come over here with your paws up until I relieve you of that useless gun you're packing." His command was soft but trenchant. "Then we'll talk."

Cokey was duly "frisked" and his captor's finger indicated a chair in front of him.

"Now that your teeth are drawn," he smiled, "you can sit down. I'm so sorry for you that I don't think I'll turn you over to the police. But that——"

The crook's body shot forward in the chair. His ratty eyes were burning with hope.

"Are youse gonna turn me loose, boss?" he gasped eagerly.

"Yes," responded the other slowly, "when I'm ready. You just listen to me. I'm Mr. Janson Harrington, as my card will show you." He shoved a square white cardboard across the table to his eager prisoner, who noted the name as stated. "You've broken into my house to rob, and

if I turn you over to the police you will be sent to jail for a long term. Of course I believe your story that this is your first attempt at crime. But that don't relieve me of my obligation to the public at large. But now that you're here you can help me out of a little difficulty. In return I will give you your liberty. Now listen."

Cokey had no choice in the matter, so he lent his ear.

"It's just this way," started off the seated man: "I've got to have your help in a little private matter. We men of wealth, as you no doubt already know, have our little secret clandestine love affairs. I'm not infallible, so I've had mine. My wife—whom I love dearly—came across several damaging letters which I neglected to destroy. She wouldn't hear any excuse or explanation that I offered, and has threatened to begin divorce proceedings at once."

He paused with downcast eyes seemingly affected by his emotions. Cokey peered at him through slitted lids. Then the gentleman resumed:

"The letters are the only proof which she can produce in court as evidence against me. Without them she wouldn't have a leg to stand on. Instead of giving them over to the keeping of her lawyer, she made one mistake. She put them in her wall-safe behind that bookcase."

He pointed a manicured finger at an ebony carved antique which adorned a place against the wall.

"By removing the first five books on the second shelf," went on the crook's captor, "the safe is uncovered."

"Den why don't youse get 'em?" Cokey asked. "Youse must know de combination."

His captor shook his head sadly.

"That's just what I don't know—now," he returned. "She had the combination changed."

Slane could not suppress a chuckle.

"Den she didn't pull a bone," he grinned. "She got ya both ways an' in de middle. When are you gonna turn me loose?"

"When you open that safe," was the blunt reply.

Cokey's smile disappeared.

"Strings, eh?" he sneered. "I t'ought so. But how'm I gonna crack it wit'out a kit?"

The crook, if the truth were known, was elated. Here was a chance to test his safe-cracking ability which was taught him by a notorious cracksman who was then sojourning in jail. And no risk of detection or arrest. Fine. He was on. And maybe he'd get a chance to double-cross his captor and steal the silverware in the chest, after all.

The gentleman arose slowly. He delved into his coat pocket and brought forth a small packet which he pushed across the desk to the crook.

"I've provided for that," he said coldly. "You'll find what you need in there. Now get busy if you want your liberty. The letters I must have, so it's up to you."

Ten minutes later Cokey Slane triumphantly swung open the door of the wall-safe. At his back, with ready revolver, stood his captor. Jamming the cold muzzle into the crook's midriff, he forced him one side.

"That's all that's required of you," he told him. "Now get out! Go the way you came in, and consider yourself lucky that you met a gentleman."

When the back door closed behind Cokey the "gentleman" smiled as he shot home an inner bolt. Then springing lightly up the stairs, he again stood before the open safe. His smile broadened as he drew out a bulky package, that he transferred to his coat pocket. Closing the steel door, he arranged the five books on the shelf again. He turned away, and his eyes rested on the brass-bound chest. Then the loud clanging of the front door bell brought him up standing, tense, alert.

By the resplendent glow of the electrolier his face was ghastly. The second loud peal, which echoed through the silent house, was followed by a loud command.

"Open the door in the name of the law!"

"Police!" The one word escaped the man inside involuntarily. He squared his shoulders, strode to the door and flung it wide open. Standing on the step was a uniformed policeman.

"Good-evening, officer; what can I do for

you?" he smiled. He held himself erect, looking straight into the bluecoat's eyes.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said policeman 1562, "but I saw the light an' thought I'd look in. I noticed a bird ducking into the alley back of here a short while ago, but I lost him. When I saw the light, of course naturally I thought of him. I'm a new man on this beat, but I was told by the sergeant that the folks here wouldn't be home for a few days. Do you happen to be one of the family, sir?"

The gentleman beamed ludicrously on the speaker, then laughed outright.

"Why, yes, officer," he said. "I only happen to be Janson Harrington. Come in."

Officer 1562 eyed him sharply, then stepped inside.

"I was about to suggest that, Mr. Harrington," he remarked. "When I saw that prowler last he was near your back gate. I'll take a look about your house, if you've no objections. Those guys are desperate, and he might be hiding somewhere until you go to bed."

"That's a good idea, officer. One of my cards, and smoke a good cigar."

The policeman observed the name thereon—Janson Harrington. As his pudgy fingers extracted a fragrant weed from a gold cigar case, he also noted the name inscribed on its shiny surface.

"Thanks," said officer 1562, removing his hat, placing the cigar inside, then adjusting it on his head again, "now I'll take a look around. You'd better come along with me, Mr. Harrington, cause you know the house and maybe some of the windows are not locked. That bird mighta got in through a window, you know."

"Oh, all right," said the other. "Keys—oh, yes. Here they are on the table. I came here tonight to get a very important letter, and unfortunately my man was called to the bedside of his dying sister. Lucky for us he left my bunch of keys which I gave him to get the house in order. My name and address are on the tag. Good idea, don't you think so, officer?" he remarked rather democratically. "One never knows when one's likely to lose them."

The quest was started at the top of the spacious mansion. Room after room was searched thoroughly. Some doors which were securely locked were opened by the house owner, after much fitting of keys.

"You see, officer," he explained, mopping his perspiring face with a costly linen handkerchief, "I so seldom use these keys that I'm really not familiar with them, in the upper part of the house, especially. When one has a flock of servants, one hardly knows his own home only when the bills are due," he finished with a nervous laugh.

Officer 1562 grunted as he entered a room which the householder had unlocked with much difficulty.

"Your room?" the policeman asked abruptly. The furnishings and atmosphere indicated such.

"Yes," was the answer.

The clothes closet was inspected, the numerous costly suits and overcoats brushed aside, but no intruder.

They entered the next room.

"Your wife's?" They were standing in a boudoir which had all the characteristics of the mentioned sex.

"Er—yes," automatically came the reply.

The policeman was silent. Harrington was relieved when they again stood in the living room. They were walking toward the door when officer 1562 halted.

"On second thought," determined the policeman, "I'll take a peep in the basement before I go."

He strode through the dining-room and kitchen and descended the stairs. The other followed closely in his wake.

All below was quiet and serene. At the termination of his unsuccessful hunt, officer 1562 stopped before a heavy oaken door which was secured by a Yale lock. There were a few of the same make of locks on some of the other doors which he had entered in his quest, so the one fastening the door he was confronting was nothing out of the ordinary.

Officer 1562 sighed as he turned to the man beside him. He winked his eye knowingly, and inclined his head toward the formidable portal.

"I'll bet you have that well stocked," he

insinuated. "'Twas a sad day for us poor mortals when the lid went on. I'd give anything for a wee drop of the real old stuff. Don't think me bold, sir; but maybe you'll have pity on me."

He smiled broadly, then sighed deeply.

"To be sure, officer," said the other hurriedly, and bending over the lock he inserted key after key in his endeavor to unlock the massive door. His face pallid and drawn, he straightened up and flung the keys on the floor.

"I'm d—— if Simson, my butler, hasn't taken off the key!" His tone was seemingly angry, as he paced backward and forward rapidly. Soon he had reached a decision, and he translated his mutterings into action without another moment's delay.

"Let's go upstairs, officer," he suggested; "maybe we'll find a little in the decanter on the buffet in the dining-room."

Officer 1562 made no response to the other's tentative offer, but followed him upstairs.

"Don't bother about it, Mr. Harrington," he remarked as he walked through the dining-room, and stood with his hand on the knob of the front door. "I'm thanking you, just the same. Good-night, sir."

He opened the door and walked out into the night.

For several moments after the policeman's departure the man inside stood gazing at the closed portal. Then he hurried to a front window and gingerly drew aside the shade and peered out. Satisfied with his scrutiny, he carefully dropped the shade back into place, then crossed the floor and ascended the stairs to the story above. In a few minutes he returned carrying in his hands two leather suitcases.

Some fifteen minutes later he arose from his knees and wiped the perspiration from his flushed visage. Walking to the sideboard in the dining-room, he frowned at the empty decanter, then retraced his steps to the front door. Turning the knob cautiously, he drew it open a few inches, gazed intently through the aperture, smiled, opened it wider and walked into the street.

"Good-morning," greeted officer 1562,

rising into view from a shadowy place near the entrance of the Harrington abode.

The man, carrying a leather suitcase in each hand, halted at the policeman's salute. His thin lips were set in firm lines as he slowly lowered his burden to the sidewalk.

"Oh, it's you?" he queried. His voice carried a purring note. "Still keeping an eye open for that burglar, I see."

"Yes, Mr. Harrington, that's what I'm paid for—keeping an eye on burglars. I suppose you're gonna wait for your car?"

"Oh, no," smiled the other, "I didn't come to the city by auto, I came by train. I'm going to take a taxi."

"Well, if that is the case," informed officer 1562, still smiling broadly, "you're in luck, sir. There's one just around the corner. Shall I call it?"

"If you will, please, officer."

The policeman rapped his night-stick on the curbing, and a figure appeared at the corner of the block.

"Here's a fare, Jim," cried the policeman; "bring around your flivver."

In a few seconds a Belt Line taxi rolled up before the two men. Officer 1562 opened the cab door, then picked up the suitcases.

"Traveling heavy this morning," he remarked as he laid them carefully inside.

"Er—yes," stammered the other. "Thank you, officer. I—"

One foot was on the step when the claimant of the house of Harrington uttered a snarling oath and reached for his hip-pocket. Too late! The next instant he was hurled headlong inside the cab. There was a short struggle in the dark. Then the click of handcuffs as the driver meshed the gears and drove off. Officer 1562 turned on his heel and strode in the direction of the patrol-box on the corner.

"'Bout time y' showed up," growled the captain of Precinct No. 9 some fifteen minutes later. Officer 1562 stood before him at attention. "Sit down," he bit off the words, waving his hand towards a chair beside his desk. "Make your report."

The policeman chuckled as a cigar fell to the floor when he removed his hat. Then the smile faded and he made his report.

"When I nabbed Cokey Slane coming over the back gate, and he told me the tale of drilling the safe and so on, I was gonna take him back and see how much truth there was in his story. But on second thought I concluded I wouldn't, so I locked him up. Detectives Brennan and Scoby, as you know, are on their vacation. They've seen Harrington several times, and know him. Daley was at headquarters, too, on the sick list. They were the only ones that could describe him. I went back to the Harrington house, as you already know, and the dicks followed in the flivver. His card, his monogrammed cigar case, and the metal tag on the key-ring—all those articles looked bona-fide enough.

"But too many keys was his undoing. Of course my suspicion was growing as we went over the house—say, for instance, the shoes and clothes in the closet of the room which he claimed was his. Too large for him by a mile. A picture on his wife's dresser. Wives don't have other men's photos in their bedrooms. But, with all that, I wasn't ready to act. Men with an army of servants, and who travel a lot, know very little—I figure it—about their homes. So his fumbling with the keys upstairs didn't mean a great deal. 'Twas the cellar."

He stooped and picked up the cigar he had dropped from the floor. Appraising it for a fleeting second, he then tossed it into his upturned cap which rested on the captain's desk.

"Well," growled his superior, "what 'bout th' cellar?"

"Nothing," finished Officer 1562, "only man to man, Captain Skillings, any guy in these dry days who has a stock laid away in his cellar, behind a locked door, and don't know the key which fit it—that's how I trapped Gentleman Ed Daley. What better proof could I have that he was a fraud? So I called the flivver when he went out with the two grips filled with silverware, and as I slammed him inside to the waiting detectives they put the nippers on him."

"You said it," grunted the Captain; "I'd have had the key made of gold."

# Scientific Crime Detection

By POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

**I**T is the belief of the French Government that all criminals leave traces of their identities, which, when analyzed, must lead to the detection of the guilty person. As soon as a crime is committed skilled investigators from the crime laboratory are rushed to the scene with their apparatus. They photograph every spot under suspicion, take all available fingerprints, secure samples of dust and dirt, shreds of cloth, particles of blood, fragments of glass and china, or any liquids. These are taken to the laboratory, where the traces are examined with test tubes, microscopes, chemicals and every known resource of science. In many cases before the day is ended the police have a clue to the perpetrator, and a net is closed around the criminal.

Men have been caught simply by an analysis of the dirt under their finger-nails, the dust in their clothes or on the soles of their shoes, the clay in the fabric where a knee or elbow touched the floor or ground, or by the blood from scratches on their hands. The methods of Bertillon, Reiss, Locassagne and Lombroso have accomplished miracles in the hands of Dr. Edmond Locard, who is the director of the laboratory of police technique in Lyons.

When warned of a crime, the bureau sends a man who records every detail of the locality with a metric camera. This instrument rules off the space under observation into little squares. His next move is to use a magnifying-glass and powder in a search for finger or shoe prints. Even washed hands leave prints which when brought out with colored powders are photographed with an enlarging lens. These prints are usually compared first with the prints on record, so that a criminal has frequently been discovered a few moments af-

ter the comparison, and it is then a mere matter of bringing him in. Even crooks wearing gloves leave readable prints that often lead to their detection. In photographing fingerprints, if the resemblance is too vague, huge microscopic enlargements are made that show the spacing of the sweat-glands, as well as the loops and whorls.

On city pavements footprints are hard to find, but prints are always left in the country, and plaster-of-paris molds are made of them, as the smallest detail, such as the shape of a nail, a worn heel or sole, the curve of the foot, may be important. Bare feet are treated the same way as fingerprints. The marks of criminal's teeth often convict them, for fillings, uneven edges, or a broken or a missing tooth always leave their mark. The imprint left in articles bitten by crooks leave the shape of the teeth as clear as a photograph to the expert. Human hairs have also played an important part in crime detection. Analyzing the dust beaten from clothing displays the suspect's trade or may show where he has been, such as the detection of a murderer who was a brassworker and killed a man in a flour mill. Brass dust and flour particles had lodged in his clothing. A few threads from a criminal's torn coat picked up on the scene of the crime told how he was dressed, and the cement dust explained that he was a mason. Another source of evidence in exposing criminals is the dust and debris that collects in the pockets. It shows many things the wearer has done, such as particles of tobacco, candy, paper, matches, dried blood, food and tiny objects that drop from under the nails or off the fingers. The seed of a rare plant which grew near the scene of a

crime once convicted a yegg in whose pocket it had dropped. In another case the investigator found a ring of candle grease on the carpet of a room before a burglarized safe, showing that the burglar stood a candle there. A suspect was picked up, and a piece of candle was found in his pocket. Adhering to the end of the candle were some fine pieces of dyed wool pulled from the rug in the plundered room. His conviction followed. The contact of clothing leaves its traces very often. Another crook had a patch in the knee of his pants, and left its imprint in the clay when he crawled out of a cellar. It led to his arrest. Crooks are often scratched by the tools they employ. Wax moulds of these cuts under the microscope show lines of different kinds so that the marks of different kinds of burglars tools can be instantly identified.

In cases where thieves use an oxyhydrogen flame the expert can easily tell the difference between two outfits. For example:

Two robberies occurred in different cities, yet both crimes were executed the same way, leading the authorities to believe the same crooks did both jobs. But it was known to the investigator that each blow-pipe leaves minutely varied effects on the steel of the safe. The heat from the blow-pipes was accurately measured from these marks, when it was found that two different oxyhydrogen machines were used. Recently these investigators have become proficient in the technique of analyzing handwriting as used by forgers. A knowledge of chemistry is necessary in this branch of detection, and the eye must be trained to detect differences in original and false signatures. They have enlarging cameras, and instruments that measure to a hair's-breadth the comparative formation of letters and lines. It is called the graphometric art, and is represented by diagrams, symbols and curves. These experts also have a technical knowledge of sympathetic inks, and are very clever at deciphering cryptograms.

Many of the invisible inks fade out, leaving no trace even on the gloss coating of paper, but can be restored by subjecting the paper to heat, water or chemicals.

When the writing disappears, a casual observer would never know it had been there. But the pen always leaves slight indented lines in the paper which an expert can easily see. There was a case in which a fraud signed a note, and got the money. The holder of the note saw him sign it, but was dumbfounded a few days later to see that the note had no signature, as it had been signed with ink that disappeared. The crook refused to sign the note again, so the matter went to court. A handwriting expert soon found the pen marks of the signature, suspected sympathetic ink, heated the paper and restored the writing. Of course the fraud had to pay the note.

Many cryptograms are hard to read. Some are quite simple in construction, but many are very puzzling. The ones that are easiest are those using numerals for letters of the alphabet, or those substituting one letter for another. But all secret writing does not employ letters and numbers; some combine both. Others use different parts of a box to designate certain letters, some are made up of certain shaped marks for each letter, and sometimes whole words and sentences mean something else, like telegraphic codes. It exercises all the ingenuity of an expert when he gets a hard one, and it often takes weeks and months to translate it. But there is usually a key to every cryptogram, and once it is found the rest is easy. The key in many cases is that the letters a and e are used more than any other. When the a's and e's are located, and a few words worked out, the rest are soon translated.

The application of these sciences to criminal cases has made the French police almost uncanny in the surprising way they arrive at a settlement of their theories.

They seldom make a mistake, for their methods are what might be termed the refinement of criminology.



# The Knob Knocker

By WILLIAM ALLEN WARD

PONCA JOE was known to the underworld as the best cracksmen in crookdom. The veteran had left a trail of knobless safes through the Eastern States, but laid the hammer aside when he reached the cities of the Middle West. The crafty Joe figured that a change in the manner of his operations would foil the police, so the cities of the Mississippi valley resounded with explosions as the master yeggman silently mixed his "soup" and used his uncanny knowledge of safe combinations in effecting some of the most sensational robberies in American crime annals. Ponca Joe alone was a crime wave. He worked single-handed, and bore the reputation among gangsters of never being caught. But Joe's luck changed. Out on the Pacific Coast a patrolman watched from a window as Joe wielded a hammer. Joe got five years, but good behavior reduced the sentence several months, and the veteran of many a safe-cracking job came out after three and one-half years a much older man, broken in spirit and in heart.

One day in late January Ponca Joe stepped from an empty freight train in the railroad yards at Dallas, and sauntered up a side street in quest of old acquaintances. Dallas was no new place to Joe. Years before he had blown a safe in Oak Cliff, and every detective in Texas got his mug as a result of that job. The mug was all the dicks got, as Joe caught a fast express for Chicago. But detectives are not the kind of fellows to forget a face. Joe's picture occupied a very conspicuous place in the gallery at Headquarters, and every detective and plainclothes man was instructed by their superiors to nab the crafty cracksmen should he happen to land in Dallas again. California authorities were kind enough to give all cities warning that Joe was out,

and sleuths throughout the country kept an eye open for this man reputed to be a wizard with the hammer and lock-pick. It made no difference with the police if Joe had vowed to Dulcy Hammond, back in Indianapolis, that he was going straight. The detective knew Joe only as a fast-working cracksmen and they did not figure that his presence would be a great benefit to any city.

When he landed in Dallas Ponca Joe stumbled along the cobblestones of an ancient street. The pavement was the kind laid many years ago, before the age of asphalt and traffic cops. The ex-convict knew that he was a marked man, and did not care to brave the thickly-congested sections of the city. He planned to follow a side street to the home of an old friend, where he hoped to obtain a loan of some badly needed money and to get some valuable information in reference to his old pals and then head for Indianapolis and Dulcy.

Patrolman Bob Haney was on his job. Down at the Central station he had taken a good look at an old descriptive placard of Ponca Joe sent out by the police following a safe robbery in Nebraska. That had been seven years ago, but the bureau of criminal identification is a very efficient institution. When one's fingerprints and photograph find a berth amid the myriad assortment at Police Headquarters it's there for keeps. So Joe's mug was resurrected on the day that a notice was received from California announcing his parole, and was placed on the bulletinboards in the assembly-room. Patrolman Haney took a good look at Joe as the veteran cracksmen slowly walked toward a small shack on a side street.

An hour later Lieutenant of Detectives Garrett nabbed him and had completed an

investigation, and Joe was released with instructions to leave Dallas immediately and never return.

"You're given one hour to put this town behind you," Garrison spoke in a snappy voice. "Get me? One hour. If you are seen in this berg later than five o'clock the coppers will put you back in the cage, and I'll see that you are held."

Ponca Joe attempted to reason with the lieutenant, but there was no use because the iron rule of the department was to nab all ex-cons and give them a few hours to leave the city. No matter what the circumstance, a man who had done time behind prison bars was an undesirable and was ordered to move on.

As Ponca Joe walked from Police Headquarters that rainy January evening, his soul rebelled against all law and order.

"I tried to square myself with them dicks, but they won't let me," he argued with himself. "I wanted to stay here just a few hours and visit my old friends, but they give me an hour to leave town. I was goin' straight, but they won't let me, so I'll just show them bulls what a good knob-knocker I am. I'll make the cops dodge to keep outta the way of my flyin' knobs."

Old Joe meant every word he said, and he made good his promise. He did not leave Dallas as he was instructed, but sulked over onto the railway tracks, and spent the early hours of the night in a friendly boxcar. With the approach of midnight Joe crawled out of his hiding place and headed for the industrial section of the city. He remembered an office on the side street along which he had plodded earlier in the day, and the yeggman determined to wreck that safe as a beginner of his new crime wave.

As rain slowly fell on the cobblestones, the veteran entered the dark alley behind the big industrial plant he had planned to rob. A steel bar he had picked up in the railroad yards was brought into use to pry open a rear window, and Joe soon found himself in forbidden territory. A searchlight was brought into play, and Joe soon stood before the big safe located in a corner of the office. Ponca placed two well-

directed blows with a hammer he had pilfered in the railroad yards, and the knob fell to the floor. A steel punch, also stolen from the shops, was placed against the door, and one hard blow with the sledge sent the combination against the floor of the safe. An instant later and Ponca was removing huge stacks of currency from the safe. It promised to be the biggest haul of the yeggman's career. Evidently the concern had enjoyed a very profitable day and had failed to visit the bank with the receipts. Joe was delighted with his luck, because he believed that this one big job would furnish him ample means to leave the old life forever and go back to Dulcy in affluence.

There was a gentle touch on Joe's shoulder. He sprang to his feet, and made a grab for his automatic.

"Why, hello, Joe, don't get excited," came a friendly voice. "I'm an old pal of yours—Salt Lake Anderson. Don't you remember me? We was on the Pacific Coast together."

"But how did you get in here?" questioned the startled Joe.

"I was in this here dump fixin' to blow that safe when I heard you comin'," the second yeggman explained. "I thought you was a bull, so I jumped over behind that counter here and waited. Then I saw you was a pal, and just stayed over there and waited."

Joe started to make his get away, but Salt Lake Anderson took hold of his shoulder more firmly.

"Say, pard, divide up," he demanded.

"Divide," snapped Joe, "where do you get that stuff? This was my own private burglary. Why should I split with you?"

"Then you'd double-cross a pal," cut in Salt Lake Anderson, angrily, "tryin' to get away with all the swag."

The Indian blood said to race through Ponca Joe's veins began to boil and the veteran yeggman sent a terrific blow to Salt Lake's jaw sending him sprawling to the floor.

"You say I double-crossed you, did you?" countered Ponca Joe as he shook his fist in Anderson's face. "Take that!" and he hit him again.

Salt Lake arose and a terrific battle began. Joe knocked him down again, and as Salt Lake struck the floor he reached up and pressed a button on the side of a desk. A yell of rage escaped Joe and he made a plunge at the other and pinned him to the floor.

The next moment there was a crash at the front door, and an instant later a squad of policemen surged through the broken-down entrance and covered the battling yeggmen.

"Well, I'll be damned!" slowly cursed Ponca Joe as he held out his wrists to receive the handcuffs.

But the police failed to bring Salt Lake

Anderson along. A plainclothes man touched Anderson on the shoulder and remarked:

"Good work, old man. When you touched the burglar alarm, we came a-running. Wish all these big plants had good night-watchmen like you."

"Night-watchmen!" the startled Ponca Joe gasped, as his piercing eyes surveyed the old-time crook.

"I went straight long ago," grinned Salt Lake. "I was only kidding you." \*

Joe turned away and followed the policemen to the wagon.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he muttered in disgust.

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## A DEADLY ALARM CLOCK

**C**ARL DORNFIELD, an inventor, used his last invention to kill himself.

His device was an intricate bit of mechanism including two alarm clocks and a tube. One end of the tube he attached to a gas jet controlled by strings connected with the clocks. The other end of the tube he put in his mouth after setting the alarm for 5 o'clock. Then he went to sleep. When the alarm went off, the strings opened the gas jet. He was found dead in his bed in 178th street, where he was employed for seven years as a janitor.

Dornfield, who was 52 years old, had been summoned to appear in the West Farms Court on complaint of a woman tenant with whom he had quarreled a few days before. It is thought by the police that he brooded over the affair and became despondent. The owner of the apartment received a letter from him concerning the trouble, and she appeared in the court. When Dornfield failed to present himself Magistrate W. Bruce Cobb issued a warrant for his arrest. Mrs. Schoeninger went to the house and found the body.

Policeman Schmeitzer was called, and he summoned Doctor Lint of Fordham Hospital, who said that Dornfield had been dead several hours. Riveted to the foot of the

bed was the device Dornfield had used to kill himself.

Dornfield had made a good fire early in the morning so that the tenants would have hot water. Then he donned his best black suit, put on a stiff white shirt and a black tie and prepared to use his last invention.

Two other inventions were found in the adjoining room, both carefully labeled with instructions. One of them was a furnace attachment for burning clinkers mixed with coal. The other was a reversible window, constructed so that the panes could be cleaned on both sides from the inside of a room.

Under a bouquet of paper flowers Dornfield had spread out photographs of himself and relatives. Several manuscripts carefully tied together were piled in a bread box. On the cover was a sign that read: "A poor man's experience. Scraps of brain rubbish. Please take a vacation and read these." The address of a brother, Ferdinand Dornfield, General Delivery, Los Angeles, was printed on a card. On a table was a thick envelope addressed to "The Honorable West Farms Court." It contained an account of the trouble he had with the tenant.

# The Avenger

By GILBERT HAMMOND

## CHAPTER ONE

**I**N "Slimy" Garrett's opium-soaked mind dwelt a vision of two faces. Alternately hate and vindictive anticipation possessed him as he pictured the features of the man and woman he had so often throttled in imagination. His fancy was so realistic that his flabby muscles grew tense and his eyes wild—his small enfeebled frame trembling excitedly at the visualization.

As he shambled through the dark, garbage-laden streets of the lower East Side, a strange exaltation thrilled him. Numbly he wondered at the transforming ecstasy of which he was possessed, considering the hopelessness, the abjectness of his condition. But the thought that he was at last free to kill made his spirit sing.

"Three gobs of lead apiece," he calculated, feeling of the revolver in the pocket of his shabby, rapidly disintegrating overcoat, "and if they need any finishin' after that I'll attend to it. Be a pretty damn bloody mess after I get through."

Obsessed as he was, Slimy could still appreciate the incongruity of his present fierce ecstatic mood.

"Why, man!" a doctor he had consulted exclaimed, "get over to the hospital as quick as you can. No use trying to conceal the seriousness of your condition. To be perfectly frank, you're likely to drop dead at any minute. I don't think you can hang on another three weeks—certainly not more than a month."

The doctor was a gruff man, not given to oily evasion in the case of such a wretched patient, so little promising of future profit. He had reeled off some techni-

cal terms relating to Slimy's heart and lungs, had referred to the vicious dissipations his condition testified to and had proffered not the slightest hope for the recuperative powers of his cocaine-saturated body.

When Slimy heard this, sick, broken and helpless as he was, the proximity of death terrified him. Then two faces came before his eyes as they did ever recurrently, and into his timorous, hating spirit came the rhythmic pounding of a delightful idea:

"Now I can kill them! Now I can kill them! Now I can kill them!"

Automatically he shuffled in time to this refrain. He liked to think of himself as an angel of retribution carrying out a plan of justice, for Slimy had been of a rather dreamy and mystic turn before Grace had appeared to topple his already quavering mind into an abyss of insane passions. This woman had given him for a few brief days the most pleasurable, the only actually happy moments of his whole abject life, made the entire subsequent disillusionment bitter beyond toleration. In her company he had forgotten that he was only a cheap, wretched little pickpocket, with shriveled features and a puny body. He became in imagination a gentleman of charm and personality of whom Grace was passionately enamored—Grace of the beautiful form, the dazzling eyes, the pert nose, the full lips, the serene poise.

He sat again in fancy across the table from Grace, in the drab, poorly lighted living-room of her flat, his tortured, sex-starved soul lost in her wide, blue, tear-filled eyes, scarcely cognizant of her words, but aware of a tremendous sympathy.

"Can't you see, Joe?" he heard her choke out again. "How often I begged him to

stay out of the company of such criminal characters, and now—this robbery—his capture— Oh, God! What will mother think when she hears of it? I wonder if it will kill her. He's my brother—he's not really bad—and mother must never find out. My God, what shall I do?"

The scene had been highly flavored for Slimy's benefit, and into his neurotic mind came a desire for self-sacrifice. His passion for Grace gave him an impulse to suffer for her sake. Delighted at her easy victory, Grace produced a lawyer, who went over all the circumstantial evidence for the purpose of proving it impossible for the judge to give a sentence of over a year in punishment of the alleged brother's participation in the robbery. Slimy signed something—he knew not what—and gave himself into the hands of the law.

Grace's impassioned promises in his ears, Slimy passed the time serenely till the day of trial. Then the moment of his judgment. A thunderous denunciatory lawyer. A bewildering bombardment of questions. The hard eyes of the jury. The brief consultation in the jury-room. The judge's solemn voice pronouncing the sentence—five years!

"She told me only a year—only a year," he had moaned as they pulled him, frightened and quivering, out of the court-room. In the cell, his passions blazing, he reviewed the procedure. Why had Grace not been present at the trial? Why had his lawyer presented such a paltry defence? Would Grace come to see him? Five years—five years! God!

Complete disenchantment came from a fellow prisoner, a former acquaintance of the individual whose liberation had followed Slimy's assumption of guilt—information that he whom Grace alleged to be her brother was none other than her lover. Then the unspeakably humiliating realization that the whole dramatic episode had been a play for the purpose of his inveiglement. Horrible days and nights followed, till his mind finally settled into a dull, aching compliance with the iron prison system.

At the end of those five years—for owing to occasional rebellious outbursts he

had received no time off for good behavior—he had come back to the city determined to find Grace. Having located her, he had knocked on the door of her apartment. A burly man with a hard face stood inspecting him in the doorway. He had caught a glimpse of Grace, still beautiful, her wide blue eyes amused, her full lips contemptuous. She had spoken something in a low voice to the man and he had grabbed Slimy by the throat, shaken him like a rag and flung him downstairs with the words:

"Don't ever show yourself around here again, you little rat, or I'll break your back in seven pieces." Then he had turned away, saying to Grace:

"I guess he won't annoy us again after that."

All of this Slimy Garrett thought of with blazing eyes and gritting teeth as he marched uptown to the measures of

"Now I can kill them! Now I can kill them!"

## CHAPTER TWO

GARRETT stood before an old brick building on East Twentieth street. Years ago it had been a private residence occupied by people of means, but recently it had degenerated into a tenement. It was late; Slimy was apparently quite alone on the street. The East River lay a block away, and through a cold, heavy mist a few straggling lights were visible on the opposite shore. The tenement was on the fringe of the gashouse district. Occasionally great spurts of flame shot skyward, illuminating with their fiery glow the rows of surrounding houses lying near in the darkness.

The ex-convict shivered and gripped his revolver. The feel of it in his pocket rather frightened him; he had never killed before. But he was too much in earnest to allow lack of previous experience to deter him. Nevertheless the question of method arose, a question he could not settle by reason of his agitation. Trusting to circumstances to settle the matter, he pushed open the door and mounted the stair.

As he entered a man emerged from the shadows of an alley, hesitated for a few seconds and slipped in noiselessly behind him.

Slimy pussyfooted to the third floor. One year before he had been thrown down the very stairs he was mounting. He grinned quaveringly as he thought of the coming retribution. It had given him a certain satisfaction during the last twelve months to keep this pair under constant surveillance. He was aware that Grace's companion was a member of a band of crooks, and he had received authentic information through underworld channels that the attentions of the police were becoming distinctly oppressive to the gang. Well, the department's claim was secondary; however—they were welcome to the carcasses Slimy would leave them.

He perceived with astonishment that the door to Grace's flat was slightly ajar. A dim, flickering light shot into the hall. He pulled out his revolver, slipped within and softly shut the door. The instant he had done so, Grace and her burly consort hastened into the dim passageway, for the moment unaware of the intruder. A satchel was in the hands of each. Slimy leveled his weapon at them and in a voice both querulous and snarling commanded:

"Gitcherselves back in that room. I wanna say somethin' before I blow your heads off. Drop that stuff. All ready to beat it, huh? Well, this is one time you're outa luck. Git back!"

Grace uttered a gasping scream; the man reached defensively for his pocket, but reconsidering the expediency of his intention, let his arms fall loosely to his sides. The satchels of both lay on the floor.

"It ain't a bull, Mike," Grace whispered affrightedly. "It's Slimy—Slimy Garrett—you know——"

"Do I know?" articulated the man furiously as he glared at Slimy. "Why, you dirty little shriveled-up, coke-sniffing, sawed-off weasel—I once threw you down a flight of stairs and I oughta throw you out the window now. Where d'you get this stuff, comin' around wavin' a gat? I'll——"

"Mike!" Grace blazed. "Shut your

mouth. Can't you see he's got the drop on you? He might——"

"Let 'im talk," Slimy said calmly. "'S'only decent to let a guy say a few last words. He ain't got long to live an' you ain't, either. That's what I came here for."

Slimy advanced with threatening suggestiveness. The two stepped back till they had entered the gas-lit front room of the flat. Slimy observed that Grace's face was a corpse-like white; the blood had faded from the full, sensuous lips and she was trembling in fright. Her wide terrified blue eyes fixed themselves alternately on the automatic and on Slimy's face. Desperately, the man began:

"Well, what d'you expect to——"

Grace clutched him angrily.

"Keep still, you fool!"

She turned her blue eyes on Slimy again and looked into his face—the eyes which had once wheedled him into serving a five-year prison term. Wonderingly Slimy was asking himself why he had not fired the instant he had seen them. His murderous determination had not weakened. It was only, perhaps, a hesitation springing from curiosity as to how the hated pair would face retribution. Slimy could not analyze that powerful subconscious desire to once more gaze into Grace's face, to watch her movements, to hear her speak. She addressed him in a tone reminiscent of those days when he had fancied her in love with him.

"Joseph!"

Joseph! He wondered how long it had been since he was known by any other name except "Slimy." He stared at her and blinked, almost impersonally curious as to whether it were possible for her to make any appeal capable of modifying his intention.

"Joseph! Do you really mean—mean to kill me?"

"The both o' youse are as good as dead already!" Slimy snarled explosively. "Didja think I was gonna let it slide by after five years up the river servin' a stretch for this here skunk? Do you know what the doc told me? He said I ain't got a month to live. An' maybe you can guess the first

damn thing I thought of when I heard that. An' may be you can figure now why I'm here."

Grace's face took on an appearance of remorseful agony; her slim white fingers made supplicating motions.

"Joe! Joe! I swear I never meant for it to turn out that way. I won't try to lie to you. I *did* play you.. But, God, how I wish that hulking brute had served the stretch that was comin' to him. But I loved him then, Joe—honest I did—and maybe I love him a little yet in spite of the way he's treated me. You don't know how a woman feels when she's—she's—that way. Why, Joe"—Grace was crying now; the tears streamed down her white face—"I couldn't bear to think of being separated from him. The way I felt then, Joe, I'd have tricked an angel from heaven to get him out. Maybe I tricked you, Joe, but I tricked myself a lot worse by saving and marrying him. You don't know the rotten life I've led the last five years, with him always nasty from expecting the police to grab him any day. To kill us won't be any revenge, Joe—we've got what's coming to us already. You were better than both of us six years ago, Joe, and you can be better than we are now. It's an awful thing to die with a murder on your soul—it makes you worse than we are."

Still staring, still blinking, the revolver still leveled—as though he had heard nothing, seen nothing—Slimy wondered if it were actually conceivable that a cherished hatred of six years could dissolve before the spectacle of a crying, supplicating woman. For an instant he was panic-stricken—then he remembered the violence he had suffered at the hands of the man. He spoke viciously:

"That's a pretty good line of guff, but maybe your memory ain't so good. Thinks I'd forgot bein' thrown downstairs the time I come here, after I got outa jail? Think I'd forgot that, huh?"

"He did that, Joe!" Grace was nearly hysterical. "Before God, I swear I was on the point of leaving him for it! I wanted to get track of you again, but I never could find you. Forgive him, Joe—and forgive

me, too. Not for his sake or mine, but for the kid. We've got a kid, Joe—three years old—the sweetest little girl you ever saw. She's boarding in the country. We're giving up the crooked game. You can't be crooked and bring up children. It ain't much just to kill a couple of crooks, but we're more than that now. We were ready to start for New Hampshire tonight. Mike has an offer of a steady job there. We wanted to settle down and have the kid with us. Only an hour ago we got a tip that cops were coming here to get Mike and me. They have it in for both of us. They've got a way of fixing it so's to send us up for as long as they want. I'm so sick of life now, Joe, if it wasn't for the baby I wouldn't care to live. But it's so hard now—I can't bear——"

She sunk tremulously on the chair and buried her face in her arms, sobbing.

The weapon in Slimy's hand quavered slightly. He knew then that he could not kill her—could never have killed her. It surprised, almost angered him to find that a feeling of pity for her situation had actually come to him. He glowered suddenly at the man, and his finger tightened on the trigger of the revolver. He'd shoot him before Grace had opportunity to dispel his resolution with her pleadings. The man's eyes stared dumbly back at him in terror; futilely he attempted to shield himself with his arms, forgetting the gun in his pocket.

There came a sudden crashing noise from the hall, as of a heavy body throwing itself against the door.

"The police!"

Grace jumped to her feet; for an instant her wild eyes distractedly surveyed the room. With an air of baffled humility she turned to Slimy.

"We're finished, Joe. It means years for both of us—the kid——"

As with sudden realization she uttered a despairing shriek and collapsed to the chair.

"Oh, God—you might as well shoot, Joe! What difference does it make now?"

At this moment a peculiar psychological phenomenon took place in Slimy's mind. He forgot his original rôle as an agent of

restitution; he forgot those bitter, crushing years of prison life; he forgot the brutal handling he had received from Grace's husband—he forgot everything except the one fact of Grace's distress—he forgot his whole plan of retaliation, and its place was taken by a plan of rescue.

The hammering at the door was accompanied by a splintering sound. The lock was giving way.

"If we could only get to the roof," Grace moaned. "With a minute's start they'd never get us. We doped it out long ago."

For the first time in his life Slimy felt himself a commander. He had conceived a desperate strategy, a strategy requiring a great sacrifice.

"Gimme your gun!" he snapped suddenly to the man. Mike handed it over.

"You've got a chance," he continued, "if you're good at duckin' bullets. Get behind me when I yank the door open, an' start blazin', and the first time you see a chance, head for the stairs to the roof."

The two crouched back against the wall in the narrow little hallway. Slimy faced the shaking door, fired two shots into it, sprang aside before the answering volley splintered through the wood, released the lock, pulled aside the door, and opened fire again. The headquarters men—there were three of them—had temporarily, for safety's sake, retreated to the flight of stairs leading below, anticipating a formidable gun fight.

"Yer gotta chance now," Slimy gritted. "Go like hell when I start firing my gun again."

Once more the bullets spat forth. Suddenly out of the semi-gloom the headquarters men saw the figures of a man and woman emerge and make for the stairs leading to the roof. Immediately they blazed at the figures, but their perception has been just a little slow. Grace and her husband were out of range in a second, and wildly scrambling up the next flight of stairs.

Defying Slimy's bullets now, the men attempted to take up the pursuit, but at that instant the crook stepped out of the door-

way of the flat and faced them, his revolvers belching fire. A man cursed in pain. One of Slimy's arms were numb; he could scarcely keep it upraised. There was also a curious sensation in his side; he wondered vaguely why it was so hard for him to catch his breath. His legs suddenly weakened. Staggering backward, he felt for the stairs which Grace and her husband had mounted. With a great spurt of strength he managed to climb a few steps into the sheltering darkness that the stairs to the roof afforded. He knew vaguely in his flight that he had surely been hit again.

From this vantage-point he turned on his pursuers, and desperately held his position. Grace must have time to escape. He fired sporadically, but it seemed as though he were gradually dropping off to sleep, and in this sleep he dreamed of Grace. He dreamed that she thanked him for his self-sacrificial devotion to her; he dreamed she was leaning over him, her face so close to his that her breath fanned his cheek.

Presently a blood-saturated body, with a twisted smile on its crimson smeared face, toppled down the stairs and lay at the feet of the men from headquarters.

Neither Grace nor her husband were capable of thinking or speaking coherently till they found themselves in a train speeding out of the city. Due to a thorough knowledge of the divers and secret channels of escape the locality afforded, they had avoided the network of the police. Seated in the car, Mike looked at his wife admiringly.

"You're the greatest kid on earth," he said. "There ain't an actress on Broadway has you beat. It ain't enough that you kid him along so's he changes his mind about blowin' our heads off, but you make him hold off the dicks for us to make a getaway. That gag about the supposed kid in the country was great."

Gratified by the praise, Grace patted her husband's hand, smiled into his eyes, and said deprecatingly:

"You've got to remember, Mike, he always was a damn fool, anyhow."

# The Invisible Crime

By GEORGE MOREHEAD

## PART TWO

### CHAPTER FIVE

**N**EXT day, when Detective Broome and Doctor Granite were discussing the Marsden case in the doctor's office, the telephone bell rang. The doctor picked up the receiver and the following conversation took place over the phone:

"Is that Doctor Granite?"

"Yes. Who is speaking?"

"I wish to ask you if Mr. Marsden is in danger."

"He is—in serious danger of his life."

"He must be saved. He can be saved."

"Yes, madam; but how?"

"Easily. I can tell you all about it. Listen. In the first place——"

The woman ceased speaking. The end came abruptly. After the last perceptible word there was a smothered sound as if a hand had been placed over her mouth. There was no further communication. After the doctor had put down the receiver and explained the conversation to Broome, he added:

"Isn't that lard luck? Do you know I believe we were about to get some important information that would give the Marsden case quite a different complexion. And now we have lost the chance, perhaps forever."

"It may not be so bad as that, doctor. I'll try to get the number of the telephone that called you up; then we may be able to find the party."

"Can you get the number?"

"Sure; they are bound to give it to the police."

Later in the day the detective obtained

the number and location of the telephone whence the message had come. It was a drugstore on Fulton street, Brooklyn. Next day the doctor and Broome visited the place, but failed to get any information concerning the person who had sent the message. No one in the store knew anything about it. They left the store no wiser than when they entered it. For a time they did not speak. Doctor Granite kept his eyes fixed on the pavement. Suddenly he stopped and said to Broome:

"I wonder if the hospital authorities will permit me to remain at the bedside of Mr. Marsden, not as a physician, but as a police officer? I wish to watch and study the case."

"I have no doubt they will. Let us go and see."

They hailed a taxicab and went directly to the hospital. The house surgeon readily accorded to Doctor Granite the privilege of watching at the bedside of the dying man; and, indeed, welcomed the proposal inasmuch as the patient had that day exhibited symptoms of renewed poisoning.

"Surely that is not possible!" exclaimed Broome.

"I am not surprised," said Doctor Granite, "as the telephone message, slight as it was, has injected a new feature into the affair."

"It is a most mysterious case," said the house surgeon. "Here we have a man dying from poison before our eyes, and we are powerless to prevent it. A murder is being committed, and yet there is no assassin."

And Doctor Granite added thoughtfully: "Yes, that is the point exactly: a murder and no assassin."

## CHAPTER SIX

DOCTOR GRANITE resumed his place at the bedside of the unfortunate man, and watched every movement and studied every symptom of the patient. For three days and nights he continued his vigil, but nothing occurred during that time to furnish a clue to the mystery. However, it was quite obvious from the condition of the patient that he was still absorbing the dreadful poison. The doctor watched the man closely to determine whether the drug was being administered by the patient himself, and he came to the conclusion that such was not the case; thereby the theory of suicide was completely eliminated, and the mysterious fact remained, beyond doubt, that a murder was being committed by an invisible assassin.

On the evening of February 1, about nine o'clock, an attendant came to Doctor Granite and informed him that a woman wished to see him.

"Where is she?"

"Outside."

"What is her name?"

"She wouldn't give it, but she insisted that it was very important for you to see her at once."

"Very well, I will go."

When he reached the sidewalk he saw a woman standing in the shadow of a tree. He approached her and said:

"I am Doctor Granite. Do you wish to see me?"

She was greatly agitated, and could not reply for a moment; when she spoke it was in a confused, hesitating way.

"I saw your name in the paper—that you were here—I came—oh, I am afraid."

She looked up and down the street nervously, as if she feared that she was being followed or watched.

"Have you come to speak about the Marsden case?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it you who telephoned to me?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then you know the truth?"

"Ah, yes! I know everything," she replied, with a sob in her voice.

"Then tell me, who is killing Mrs. Marsden?"

"That I will not tell."

"Remember the man is dying."

"Yes, yes, I know, and I wish to save him, but I will not give you any names. I will tell you the cause of his illness, but you must promise you will not try to find out who I am or who is the guilty man."

"Consider, madam, that you are making yourself an accomplice of the assassin. The man is dying on account of your silence. You say you wish to save his life; tell me the name of the guilty man."

"What shall I do?" she muttered, incoherently. Then she remained silent; and the doctor feared that any abrupt movement or insistent entreaties on his part might put her to flight. Suddenly she uttered a cry of alarm, and said:

"There—there—he's coming!"

She came closer to the doctor, as if to seek his protection. She was trembling with terror. She cried:

"Save me! He is coming! I'm afraid of him!"

"Is he the assassin?"

"Yes; he has followed me! I am lost! Let me go!"

The doctor had seized her by the wrist to prevent her flight. He could now hear the footsteps of a man approaching at a rapid pace. Once more he addressed the woman:

"Save the dying man. How is he being poisoned? One word."

She thrust her free hand into the corsage of her dress and drew forth a letter which she handed to the doctor, as she said:

"Take this—it is all there. Let me go!"

At that moment a man leaped upon the doctor, threw him to the ground and wrenched the letter from his hand. The woman uttered a cry of fear and ran down the street; the unknown man pursued her, and the sound of their footsteps was soon lost in the distance. The doctor did not attempt to follow them, although if it had been possible he would have been glad to have rescued the unhappy woman who had cried out, "I am lost." Then, a circumstance quickly changed the current of his

thoughts. In his right hand, tightly gripped, he found a piece of torn paper.

"Ah! the letter!" he suddenly thought with joy.

No doubt the unknown man in his haste thought he had seized and carried away the whole letter; but he had only torn it, and a fragment of it remained clenched in the doctor's hand. Did that fragment disclose the solution of the mystery? The doctor hastily entered the hospital, straightened out the torn and wrinkled scrap of paper, and found it contained the following unconnected words:

"....the truth....forged two....dollars which....the crime he....murder the....the manner in....arsenic....false....hole in....certain death....mysterious....follow this....be lost....save him...."

After reading these words the doctor made a gesture of despair. It seemed that some fatality intervened whenever a clue was on the point of being discovered. First, it was the telephone call interrupted at a critical moment, no doubt, by the unknown man who had to-night seized and torn the incriminating letter. The enigma was hidden within the words: "the manner in....arsenic....false....hole in...." But how should one fill in the intervening spaces? What meaning could be attached to the words "False" and "hole in"? There was no answer to these questions. The torn letter revealed the one terrible fact, that certain death awaited John Marsden within a few days. He read and re-read that fragment of a letter, but the words were separated by abyssmal depths that he could not fathom.

Next morning the hospital doctors in charge of the case were agreed upon the point that the absorption of the poison still continued, and stated that, in their opinion, the patient could not live more than four days, unless the absorption ceased. When Detective Broome arrived at the hospital Doctor Granite said to him:

"Marsden has only four days to live—only four days! It is dreadful! What can we do?"

Then he told Broome of the woman's

visit and the history of the torn letter, which he showed to the detective.

"I have a sequel to your story," said Broome. "Early this morning the body of an unknown woman was found on the river bank not far from here. She had been killed last night by a knife-thrust in her back, and her body is now in the morgue. It may be the woman you saw last night."

"It may be. Let us go and see her."

When they saw the body at the morgue Doctor Granite could not identify it, as he had seen the woman only in the dark shadow of a tree; but the size and general physique of the body appeared to tally with that of the unknown caller. There were no marks upon the body or the clothing that would aid in the identification. Even a ring had been rudely torn from one of the fingers of the left hand—probably a wedding-ring.

"There is one means of identification," said the doctor. "I have a part of the letter she gave me. She must have left some finger-marks upon it. They can be compared with the fingerprints of the dead woman. Will you attend to that at once, Broome, and let me know the result this afternoon? Do not lose a moment, as Marsden has only four days to live."

At three o'clock that afternoon Broome returned to the hospital and reported to the doctor that the finger-marks upon the letter corresponded exactly with the fingerprints of the dead woman.

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor; "that is our first clue to the assassin, and it is a good one. You remember the drugstore in Brooklyn from which she telephoned? Well, no doubt she lived in that neighborhood. Have her photographed and then make inquiries at the stores in that vicinity. Some one may know her. Can you do that this evening?"

"Yes."

"Tomorrow we may know the assassin."

Having secured the photograph, Detective Broome spent the evening and part of the next forenoon visiting the stores in the designated locality and exhibiting the photograph. He visited thirty stores without success, which made his task a discourag-

ing one; but at the thirty-first store his perseverance was rewarded. It was a drugstore, and the proprietor recognized the photograph as that of a woman who had been in the store several times with a man who was no doubt her husband. He did not know the man's name nor his address; but he passed the store frequently and, from his conversation, he had learned that the man was a dentist.

"Can you describe his dress and appearance?"

"Yes," replied the druggist. "He is a tall man, about five feet ten, would weigh about one hundred and eighty, a full face, with a pale complexion, and a short light-colored mustache. I have seen him with his hat off, and he is quite bald."

"How does he dress?"

"Usually in a dark gray sack suit and soft fadora hat, either black or pearl."

"Thank you. I think I can find him now."

"Oh, another thing!" added the druggist. "He has a pronounced cast in one eye."

## CHAPTER SEVEN

ARMED with the foregoing description, Doctor Granite and the detective invaded Brooklyn in search of the assassin. From the directory they made a list of the names and addresses of the dentists residing in that part of the city. Then they started to call upon them. After they had seen seven or eight dentists without obtaining any information they came to the conclusion that the man they sought was not well-known in the profession. But they finally visited a dental office in a side street off Fulton, of which the door was locked. The sign at the side of the door bore the name: "Ralph Whelan, Dentist."

The two men crossed the street to a bakery and confectionery store just opposite. It was an excellent place to make inquiries, as the bakers usually know every one in their vicinity. There was a woman in charge of the store, and of her the doctor inquired:

"Do you know the dentist across the street?"

"Oh, yes, quite well; he comes in here to buy bread and cakes."

"What kind of a man is he. I mean, what does he look like?"

"A big man with a pale face and a sort of squint in his eye."

"Has he any whiskers?"

"Yes, a small mustache, kind of yellow."

"Have you seen him lately?"

"Not for two or three days," replied the woman; "they were not in for bread yesterday nor today."

"Do you mean this woman?" asked the doctor, showing her the photograph.

"Yes, that is his wife."

At that moment a man came out of the dentist's house. The woman caught sight of him and exclaimed:

"There he is now!"

"Who?" asked the doctor.

"The dentist, Mr. Whelan; just came out of the house."

The doctor was already on his way to the door as he asked the woman:

"Which way did he go?"

"Toward Fulton street."

Instantly the doctor and the detective rushed from the store and turned the corner; but when they had reached the corner the man was not in sight. An automobile was just starting from the curb; in a moment it was speeding in the direction of New York. There was no other car in sight; no means of pursuit.

"Well, he has given us the slip this time," said the detective.

"I wonder where he's going?" said the doctor.

"He was carrying a valise, and it looks as if he was trying to make an escape."

"It does. Now we must find a telephone and notify headquarters to watch the railroad stations and telegraph his description to all points leading to Canada."

"It seems to me," said Broome, "we have no evidence against him; at least, nothing to justify his arrest."

"I admit that," said the doctor, "but we must not allow him to escape. I should like to have him attend his wife's funeral."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

**A**FTER they had carefully set the police net for the suspected assassin the doctor and the detective went to the nearest police court and obtained a warrant to search the dentist's office and residence, which were located in the same house.

At four o'clock that afternoon, with the assistance of a locksmith, they entered Whelan's house and commenced to ransack his office. In a writing-desk they found a number of business letters, accounts and receipts, which did not interest them; but in a small drawer they found a pass-book of the American National Bank which showed that Whelan had made two large deposits during the preceding month. He had deposited twelve thousand dollars on December twentieth, and the sum of ten thousand four hundred dollars just one week later.

"Ah!" exclaimed the doctor, "I wonder where he got the money?"

"That's a very interesting question," said Broome.

The telephone bell rang. Broome answered it, and the following conversation took place:

"Is that Doctor Whelan's office?"

"Yes."

"Who's speaking?"

"A friend of his."

"Is his wife there?"

"No."

"Well, this is the Lincoln Hospital. Doctor Whelan was brought here this afternoon badly injured.

"How did he get hurt?"

"In an automobile accident."

"Did you say 'Badly injured?'"

"Yes; he may die at any moment."

"Well, I'll go and see him at once."

The detective hung up the receiver, turned to the doctor, and said:

"Well, what do you think of that? Whelan dying in the hospital—automobile accident. That beats me."

The doctor rose and seized his hat, saying:

"We've got to see him before he dies,

and find out what he knows about this case. I have a suspicion he knows all about it."

Half an hour later they entered the Lincoln Hospital and, as officers of the law, were admitted to the bedside of the injured man. The surgeon in attendance told them that the man's backbone was broken, that he was seriously injured internally, and his death was a question of minutes.

"May I speak to him?" asked Doctor Granite.

"Certainly; but I don't think he can answer you."

"I must try."

Doctor Granite approached the dying man and, leaning over him, spoke slowly and distinctly close to the man's ear.

"John Marsden is dying; how was he poisoned?"

The injured man opened his eyes and his lips moved. He was trying to speak. Doctor Granite placed his ear close to the man's lips to catch any faint words he might utter. Even then only two words were distinct enough to be intelligible. The doctor was positive that the dying man used the words "arsenic" and "hole." The doctor continued to listen for a moment, but there was no further speech—no more to hear. The man was dead.

"Well!" declared the doctor, "luck is against us. We have lost another clue, and the mystery remains as dark as ever."

At the hospital John Marsden was still absorbing minute doses of poison which the physicians were striving in vain to counteract. The patient was growing weaker every day. Apparently his hours were numbered.

## CHAPTER NINE

**N**EXT morning the detective and Doctor Granite returned to the dentist's house to resume the search. They carefully examined the operating room and laboratory without finding any material evidence. Then they visited the living-room of the house and, lying on a small table they found the dentist's diary wherein he entered the appointments made with his

clients. An examination of this book disclosed the fact that John Marsden had had four appointments with Doctor Whelan during the last two weeks of December.

"Ah!" exclaimed Doctor Granite, "that establishes a connection between the two men. That is some encouragement."

The next room they searched was apparently the bed-chamber of Mrs. Whelan. An examination of the bureau, dressing table, chiffonier and other articles of furniture disclosed nothing—absolutely nothing—and they were about to leave the place when Doctor Granite spied a waste-paper basket in an obscure corner of the room. He picked it up and emptied the contents on a table. After he had examined and put aside the larger pieces of paper, he found there remained a large number of very small pieces which appeared to be the fragments of a torn letter.

"What do you think of that, Broome? The pieces are mighty small. Do you think it worth while to try to put them together?"

"Yes, I do. You must remember, doctor, she is the woman who wrote to you the other day. We ought to take a chance at it. These fragments may be the missing parts of the torn letter you had."

They commenced to piece together the torn letter. It had been rent into forty or fifty small pieces, so the task of re-joining them was a tedious affair. It was fully a half-hour before the letter began to take shape; after that they made better progress, and finally the letter was complete with the exception of three very small pieces which were missing; but without them they were able to decipher every word. The letter was without date and without address. It read as follows:

"I do not know if I will have the courage to send this letter, as I am afraid. I know it is my duty to do so, but it is very hard to denounce my husband as a thief and an assassin. If I remain silent I become an accomplice in his crime. At this moment I feel it my duty to denounce him, so I shall write down what I know. My husband had as a client at different times Mr. John Marsden, who paid by a check on

the Standard Bank. Some time in the month of December I was surprised to see my husband trying to imitate John Marsden's signature, and later I discovered that he had made a forged check for twelve thousand dollars, which I know he deposited in his own bank. And as one crime leads to another, I believe my husband is now trying to kill Mr. Marsden to cover his forgery. I don't know how he will do it, but I believe it. I feel it is true; and I must tell it. It is so horrible."

That was all. She had written so much and then having become afraid, or having changed her mind, she had torn the letter into pieces. After reading the letter the two men remained silent for a few minutes. They were considering the situation and striving to find a solution of the mystery. They had no doubt that Whelan was the assassin, but how did he administer the poison to his unfortunate victim? That question was still unanswered; and John Marsden's life depended upon a speedy and correct answer to it. At last Doctor Granite spoke calmly and thoughtfully:

"Now, Broome, let us see where we stand. We are confronted with a most ingenious crime, conceived in the brain of a cunning man. Have we not the same intelligence, the same cunning to conceive and comprehend it? Let us see. In the first place, what is the mystery? It is this: John Marsden is dying from poison, and there is no one giving him that poison. The only conclusion which we can deduce from that fact is that the arsenic is being absorbed mechanically, involuntarily, by the victim. That is evident. It must be so. The assassin has devised some method whereby the absorption of the poison cannot be avoided by the victim, or the source of it discovered by a physician. How has he done it? Where is that poison concealed? How has he done it? Where is that poison concealed? Now, what words did Mrs. Whelan use in the letters? 'False' and 'Hole.' And the word 'hole' was also used by Whelan on his deathbed. There is the secret; there is the word upon which the mystery hinges. What does it mean? What does it mean? Ah! Eureka!"

Doctor Granite rose quickly from his chair, his face radiant with the joy of success and triumph, as he exclaimed:

"Yes, yes, now I have it! Now I know the truth! I am sure of it! It is so clear, so simple. Why didn't I think of it before?"

"What is it, doctor, what is it?"

"Come. We must go to the hospital at once. We will save Marsden now. I am sure of it."

"Tell me, doctor, what have you discovered?"

"Come. Let us go. I will tell you on the way."

An hour later at the hospital a group of physicians were examining a tooth, a man's tooth, one that had just been extracted from the mouth of John Marsden. It was Doctor Granite who was speaking:

"It is one of the most ingenuous crimes that ever came under my notice. Look at the center of the tooth. There is a round cavity which communicates with the root

by a small canal through which the arsenic could be introduced into the system in minute but yet sufficient quantities to cause death. And you will notice also that there is a communication between the cavity and the mouth by means of a very small hole, and yet large enough to permit the saliva to reach the poison, dissolve it gradually, and allow it to enter the system."

The next day the wife and the sister, having recovered their freedom, made a visit to the hospital. The common danger in which they had been placed and the mutual error they had made as to the cause of the poisoning had created a bond of sympathy between them; the former enmity had given place to sisterly affection.

A steamer ticket from Halifax to Cherbourg and a European bill of exchange for the amount of the stolen money were found in the pocket of the dead dentist.

And thus ended a mysterious crime.

(The End)

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## HOW A SING SING PRISONER ESCAPED

THE daring daylight escape of a Sing Sing prisoner by outwitting the sentries and scaling a twenty-foot stone wall was broadcast to the countryside about Ossining recently through the incessant rise and fall of the strident prison siren. It was the first sensational break at the penitentiary in a year.

Morris Kildare, twenty-nine years old, taken to Sing Sing only five weeks before on being convicted of attempted burglary, is the fugitive. He was believed to have hopped a freight train on the New York Central as it passed near the prison about 11 o'clock a. m. and gone toward New York. Police of every town on the way, as well as railroad detectives, had been enlisted in the search.

Kildare's dash for liberty came at a psychological moment. Part of the prison pop-

ulation was busy at the time with the newest arrival — Harry Hoffman, convicted slayer of Mrs. Maud Bauer. Hoffman's pedigree had been taken and he was waiting to be fitted out in a gray uniform.

Just as he was put into an emergency cell the siren started its wail. Conflicting stories were told as to how Kildare could have eluded the sentries. Some said he was working on the coal pile, while others insisted he marched among the trusties, among whom he did not belong, and clambered over the wall when the guards were looking the other way.

Kildare had been sentenced to an indeterminate term of from one year to two years and a half by Judge Olvany in General Sessions. With good conduct he would have been eligible for release by January 21 next.

# Solving Sol's Face

By WALTER ARCHESTER ELLIS

**M**Y business caused me to study faces. I always believed that the predominating thoughts and emotions in the brain and soul of a man are shown in his face.

In most cases I needed but to glance at a face to read the predominant traits in the character of the person behind it.

But there came a time when one case proved to be similar to the problem in the old-fashioned arithmetic: after turning to the answer in the back of the book one wondered why it did not seem as easy at first.

This was the case of Sol Mariano Smith, Cigars and Notions.

His shop was not far from the old Union Station in Chicago, on one of those half-alley looking streets in the very heart of one of the districts where the short, fat women wear shawls of many colors and the men like to appear on special occasions in light blue trousers and shirts, and neckties of brilliant colors.

Three balls and overcoats chained to iron stands in front of the stores were familiar marks to the locality.

Nearly everybody in the neighborhood made visits occasionally to the shop of Sol Mariano Smith. Upon the window in large yellow letters was lettered: Cigars and Notions.

But neither his cigars, tobacco, nor his notions drew me there. It was his face. It was a funny one.

The name, though, had at first excited my curiosity—Sol Mariano Smith. I could no more get the idea of such a combination into my head than I could figure out anything of his character by studying his features.

And as I said at the beginning, it was a part of my business to study physiognomy.

So every time I went into the dingy little shop and saw him sitting in the rear by the door leading into his mission hall beyond, I was compelled to secretly laugh at that queer combination of expressions in his features. But always I wondered what was behind it.

As I entered on St. Valentine's Day perhaps the comics in the window raised the smile, but I laughed out loud as I looked into Sol's face.

There he sat—short and fat, with iron-gray hair closely cropped as usual. He had a monkey-like chin, with its cris-crossed wrinkles, too prominent a forehead, and the merest hint of a nose. I studied the man as I smiled and greeted him.

Then, as he handed me the cigars I asked for, I looked attentively at his mouth. Ah! thought I, maybe that's the key! But it was not.

At first it seemed that he was compressing his lips to keep from laughing. But a moment later, even as you looked, the little wrinkles about the drooped corners of the lips hinted that perhaps it was the forty-five or fifty odd years of hard knocks that had wrecked the once well-formed mouth. The mouth certainly was not funny.

Perhaps he saw the humor in my expression or, as he afterwards said, he simply desired very much to talk, for he gave me a friendly smile and began to open up a conversation.

As he spoke I watched his eyes more keenly; then I saw that behind those sharp little blue orbs were things that nobody could ever figure out, unless the tongue, a few inches below them, should choose to tell his secrets.

I sat down and let him talk. He gave me to understand that he picked his friends.

That he had chosen me as the newest addition to his list, and had figured I was either a minister or a quiet professional man. Therefore he had hesitated to force a conversation upon me of a frivolous nature.

And Sol Mariano Smith instantly launched into deep stuff: physiognomy and philosophy—and then some others.

He knew all kinds of things about life, and the people that lived it—if one believed what Sol Mariano Smith was telling me.

But he spoke most intelligently and impressively about the "Game of Life" and the "Dealer" behind the Board called Justice." That's the way he put it.

"You can beat the Game of Life with loaded cubes; you can beat the game of poker with marked cards, or bluff; you can beat the sports by 'fixing' the play or players," he said, "but, friend, the human being has never been born, and can never be born, who can beat the game of life, as long as Justice is the dealer—and he always deals."

He sat reminiscently tapping the counter with a queer smile upon his queerer face and remained silent in speech for a moment, as if about to give out some important secret; then he leisurely resumed:

"When they tell you that Justice is a woman, and is blind, why, don't you believe it. It's a man—fair and square, and with both of his eyes wide open all the time. He deals for Life—a fair and square game. Everything in it goes for full value. Nothing more, or less. In the end—maybe today, tomorrow or in generations—the balance is sure to be perfect.

"There always comes out of the game just about what was put into it—if you play fair. And to try to beat Justice"—he smiled and waved his hand in a ridiculous gesture as he broke off and waited upon a child who purchased gum and a penny stick of candy. Then he returned to his subject.

"As I was saying, about fifty years has taught me that to try to beat Justice is another way of inviting a beating yourself. He always retaliates with a play that puts you out of the game or badly cripples your pile."

After a pause he leaned over toward me and spoke in a lower tone:

"When a man keeps trying to beat Life's dealer once in a generation or so, he gets piqued. Do you know what I mean? He gets sore. Then Justice mocks you and marks you. Yes, he marks you right in the face, so that everybody will know that something is the matter with you. But it takes a man who has been marked in the face to know what is the matter." He paused and lit his cigarette.

I sat quietly studying the queer face before me, trying to decide whether he was about to spring a new cult or whether he was simply a plain nut after all. Then I made a chance remark:

"So that's what's the matter with your face, eh?" I attempted to laugh jokingly.

"You've guessed it, friend. I've been marked," he smiled, "but I was warned. Listen to this:

"My early days were spent in the orphanage in the missions. And afterward I ran away and set myself to study for the ministry. I was ever warned to play the game fairly and squarely. But I preferred in after years to try a shorter route to wealth."

He noted my glance toward the adjoining hall, where he each Sunday lectured in his little mission. He smiled.

"I turned down the poor girl that had waited for me for years and married a rich one. The other died.

"When a letter came from the broken-hearted one before she died my wife read it and quit me cold. Justice beat me, you see."

I nodded, and he went on:

"I cut out the ministry for good. Tried ballyhooing at the fairs and circuses. It paid better, but I lost the money I earned quickly and constantly.

"Finally I got a few cents together and started a small business. I thrived. Then I found it too slow and added a few card games in the back room. Raids came repeatedly, then I went down and out.

"I shook my fist in the face of the Dealer Justice and tried again, although I knew I was bucking a hard man's game. I used my smooth tongue and quick wit and be-

came one of the slickest con men in Jersey.

"Money ran halfway around the block to jump into my pocket. Then one day while I was engineering a petty larceny trick a man's life was lost in the fracas which ensued. I was let off with five years in prison.

"When I came from jail something was the matter with me. Every employer turned me down as soon as I applied. I could ever hear the refrain: 'He's a crook'; and folks laughed slyly at me whenever they looked into my face—just as you have been doing since you first came in."

He smiled humorously at me as I showed embarrassment. Then with a gesture he waved me to silence and proceeded:

"One day I stopped in front of a mirror; I saw the reason: I had been marked by Justice right in the face."

He leaned back, crossed his short, fat legs and took a more confidential attitude. I looked into his eyes and felt that something more was coming; the tongue was about to tell its secret.

"So there you are," he went on. "If every one believes a man is a crook, and one can't get a job that brings any money worth thinking about, why, at my age, one has to open a small business—perhaps two businesses," he added, looking toward the middle door, "so that one can do the best one can until the game closes." His pause was but slight, for he added:

"For the first year I was about at a stand-still, excepting a few dollars in the bank after rent was paid. But I hit upon a little side business"—he nodded toward the mission hall—"that will soon put me on Easy street again."

He paused to grin and relight his cigarette before observing:

"Sometimes I think that I've caught the Dealer napping at last—do you catch on?" winking slyly.

I admitted that I did not quite catch on.

"Well, I figured you out as all right. I can tell 'em. Come on," he said, leading me through the middle doorway.

Straight to the altar we went. He removed the big book, pressed a spring, and up jumped a pipe and faucet from the hollow within. A whisky glass came from his pocket.

"I always accommodate my trusty friends," he smiled, as he filled the glass with the liquor and passed it to me.

"Do you know the real stuff?" he asked proudly.

After I tasted it I remarked enthusiastically:

"You certainly have the real stuff. I have tasted it before, but for several weeks I have been trying to find out where it came from. You see it is my business to know the real stuff."

He looked at me with a sudden suspicion spreading over his queer face. In that moment I realized why he looked like that as he inquired:

"What is your business, may I ask?"

"I am a Government Revenue officer."

The old man gasped, then gripped his chest as if in a spasm. Turning ashy pale, he whispered:

"Damn you—damn you! Justice again! I'm through!"

Like a crumpled old scarecrow he tumbled to the foot of the altar—beaten—out of the game forever.

## OLDEST CONVICT GOES BACK

**S**ING SING Prison's oldest inmate, William Dewitt, eighty years old, suffered a shock yesterday when as he was about to leave the institution on parole a warrant was received ordering him rearrested, charged with violation of probation in the Westchester County Court. Dewitt has

served time in more than twenty penal institutions since 1863, according to prison officials.

"My health is good," the old man told reporters, "but my spirit is not so good." Dewitt returned to Sing Sing a few months ago, convicted of burglary.

# What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

The article "What Does Your Handwriting Tell You," which appeared in No. 157, brought us such a flock of inquiries and requests for service on graphology that we have started such a department, conducted by Miss Rice. She is well known for her character delineations based on deductions from specimens of handwriting. We wish to make this a helpful department for our readers. Send us specimens of your handwriting, Miss Rice will analyze them, and the reading will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of answers can be published at a time in each issue owing to lack of space. If you desire an early reply and personal letter from Miss Rice, cut out the coupon on page 63 and send it to us, enclosing 10 cents and a stamped envelope to cover the cost of stationery, handling, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you a personal reading. The following are answers to a number of our readers who have written to Miss Rice. —THE EDITOR.

EVAN—Yours is a very subtle case, involving sex phobias and religious mania. You sit and brood, but haven't the nerve to give expression to your thoughts. Religion should be treated with respect, but there is no sense in going crazy over it. The more fanatical you become, the more mis-

*The chance to seal*

*day in the last*

erable your life will be. Get rid of that habit of secretiveness, and try to think the people of the world are not all quite as bad as you think they are, for surely the worst of us have some redeeming qualities that compensate for our shortcomings in other directions. Your writing is very poor.

STEPHEN H. VANDALIA, ILL.—I never believe in telling any one that they are

wicked, for the simple reason that very few people are really wicked. Most of us are weak and some of us are wicked at times, or about certain things; but I have yet to see a piece of handwriting which showed me a nature without some good. In your case there is every evidence that your foolish idea about being so wicked is a mere bit of youthful nonsense. You will soon get over this and blush when you remember how you half gloried in being so naughty. Better train that fine mind of yours, Stephen. You really have a great deal of ambition, if you once you will get away from these day dreams about being the b-a-a-a-d man of your family. You ought to be a success in any kind of work which requires and rewards great manual dexterity.

CARSON AND COMPANY. — The person whom you have selected for your cashier loves money devotedly, and has pretty "high" tastes. Is this the sort of a person to whom you will willingly entrust your funds? Not if you heed this warning, you will not! Mind you, I don't say that this writer is dishonest. I just say that he is weak where money is concerned, and that it would be cruel to expose him to the temptation which comes from the constant handling of money not his own. The strongest of us sometimes fall before that, and to this type of man, to whom a hundred dollars would mean nothing, nine hundred thousand would mean everything. Such a man you could trust with the petty cash of the office without a doubt. It is only something large that would tempt him, and that very something is what you are about to give him. Better not.

# MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

- 102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
- 103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
- 105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
- 107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigle.
- 108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
- 109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
- 112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
- 113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
- 114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
- 115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigle.
- 116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
- 117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
- 118 "Number Nine Quaker Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
- 120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
- 121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static.
- 122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
- 123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
- 124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigle.
- 125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
- 126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
- 128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigle.
- 129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shney.
- 130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
- 132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
- 134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
- 135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
- 136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
- 137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
- 138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luist.
- 139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
- 141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigle.
- 142 "Blood Rubles," by J. Werner Phelps.
- 143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
- 144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
- 145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
- 146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
- 147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
- 148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
- 149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
- 150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
- 151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
- 152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
- 153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
- 154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

If you cannot procure any of the numbers you want from your newsdealer, send us the price, ten cents, in money or postage stamps, and we will mail them to you postage free.

The price of the following numbers is 15 cents:

- 155 "Laughing Death's Trall," by Nels Leroy Jorgensen.
- 156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Willson.
- 157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
- 158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
- 159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigle.
- 160 "The Shadow of a Noose," by Jack Bechdolt.

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# Finding "The Fountain of Youth"

*Along-Sought Secret, Vital to Happiness, Has Been Discovered.*

By Walter S. Dean

*Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!  
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!*  
—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes



recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korax compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only \$2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

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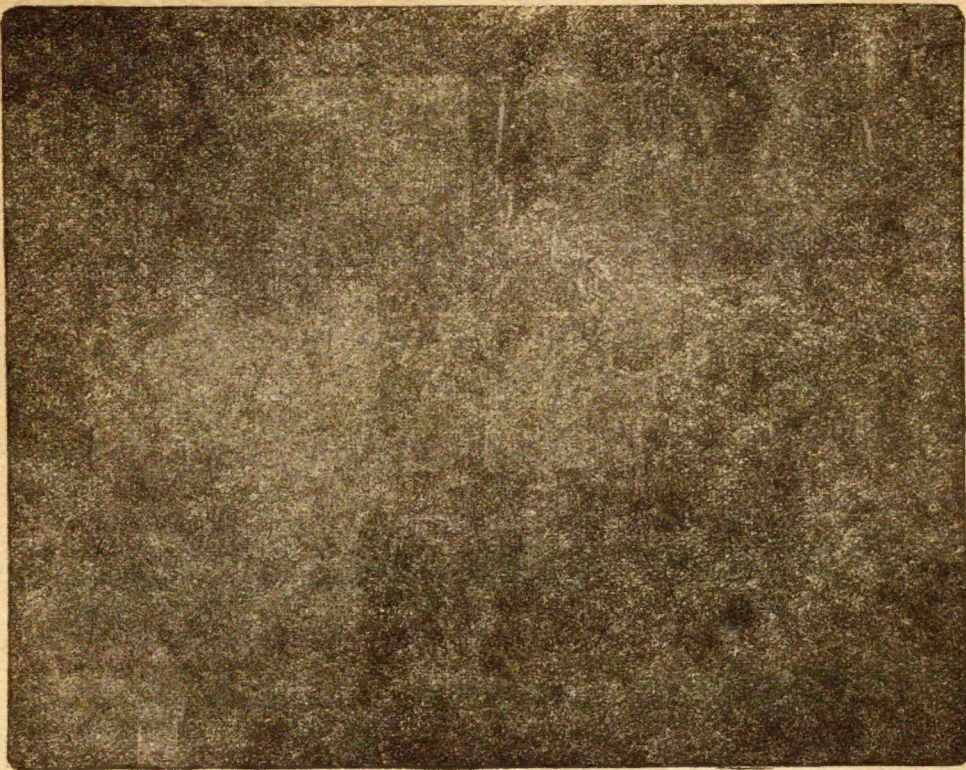
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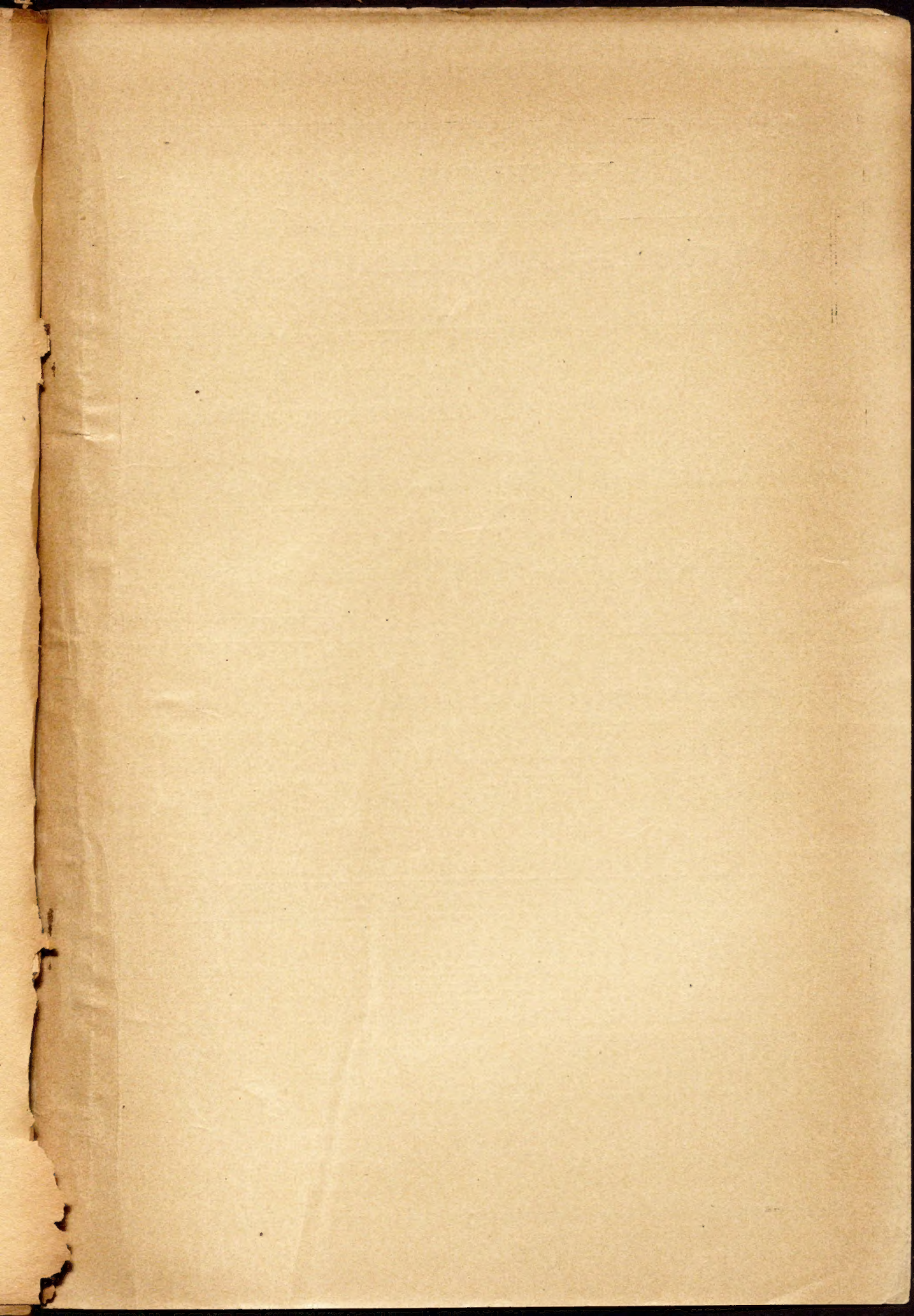
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